

STORIES FROM
The Bible

.. BY ..
M. GASTER, PH. D.

TO MY
GRANDCHILDREN

Come, ye children,
hearken unto me,
I will teach you
the fear of
THE LORD.

Pa 34. v. 11.



ADAM AND EVE DRIVEN FROM EDEN

STORIES FROM The BIBLE

• BY •

M. GASTER, PH. D.

*Illustrated with
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and Black & White
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SIDON LOOKING TOWARDS LEBANON.

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THE PYRAMIDS FROM THE NILE.

FOREWORD

In telling these stories of the Bible, I have endeavoured to follow as closely as possible the language of the Bible in its noble simplicity and unsurpassable beauty. Nothing can equal the grandeur of the inspired writers who recounted the acts of God and His ways with man.

I have taken the stories from the original Hebrew and I have interpreted them in an independent manner, yet in faithful accord with the ancient tradition. I have essayed to remove many a stumbling block from the path of those who would travel on the high road of Bible experience. We see in these stories virtue and reward, sin and punishment, weakness and strength, sorrow and joy, deep piety and strong faith, and above all the Divine Justice tempered with mercy and the all-embracing love of God.

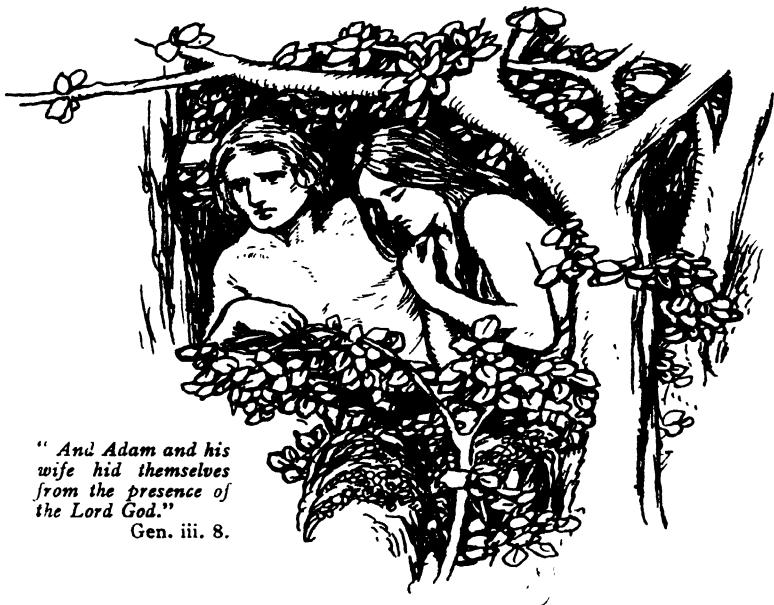
The moral to be drawn from each of these stories has been indicated by an appropriate sentence culled from Holy Writ, for my chief aim has been to place a safe guide in the hands of the young, and to provide them with heavenly food for their journey through life.

May this new presentation of the stories of old give strength to the hearts of the readers, deepen their faith and give them joy everlasting.

M. Gaster



"SHE TOOK FOR HIM AN ARK OF BULRUSHES, AND . . .
PUT THE CHILD THEREIN; AND SHE LAID IT IN THE
FLAGS BY THE RIVER'S BRINK." Exod. ii. 3.



"And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God."
Gen. iii. 8.

ADAM AND EVE—PARADISE LOST

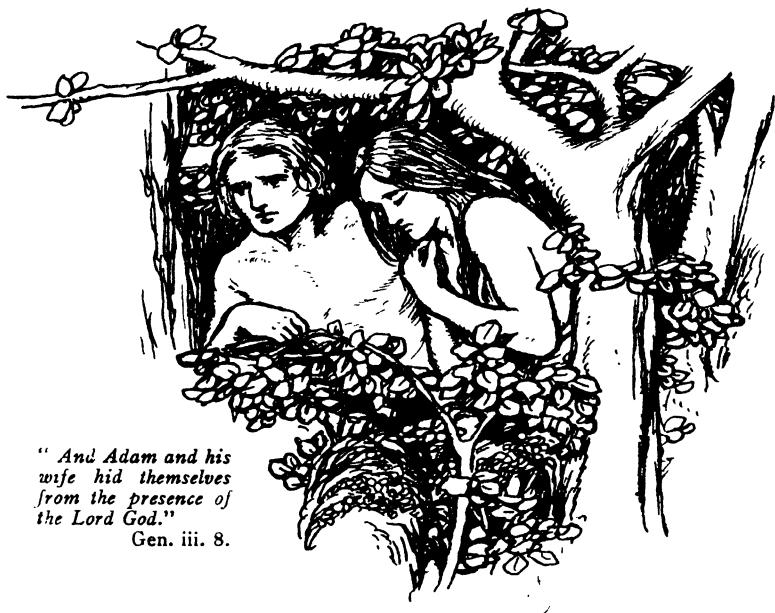
"And God blessed them."—GEN. i. 28.

In the beginning, when God made heaven and earth, there was nothing but darkness and void, and the spirit of God moved over the vast deep. He spoke, and there was Light. And He called the Light "Day," and the Darkness He called "Night." And there was Evening and there was Morning, One Day.

And God created day by day new things to make this world beautiful. He spoke, and the waters gathered themselves into mighty seas, and the dry land rose above the waters. And again a day passed, and the earth was covered with grass and flowers, with bushes and trees, which sprouted and grew and had their seeds in them. And another day passed, and the great luminaries appeared



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in the heavens—the Sun and the Moon, and also the Stars. And the Sun was to shine during the day, and the Moon to light up the night. Again a day passed, and God spoke, and birds began to flit about and to twitter, to sing in the trees and bushes ; and monsters and fishes filled the seas. And another day passed, and the earth was filled with all kinds of animals and creeping things, each one according to its kind. And last of all God made Man out of the dust of the earth, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. Then he made him a wife. And God called the Man Adam and the Woman Eve, and He blessed them, and made them rulers of this world, over all the animals and beasts, over all the birds and fishes, and ordered them to live only upon the yield of the earth and the fruits of the trees.

And when God had made Adam, He had finished with the Creation of New Things.

And there came the rest of the Sabbath Day, for on it God had ceased from His work. And God took Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden of Eden, where they were to live a happy life. And in the midst of that garden He planted two trees : the one He called the TREE OF KNOWLEDGE of Good and Evil, and the other He called the TREE OF EVERLASTING LIFE ; and God told Adam and Eve that they might eat of any fruit in the garden, but not of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Among the animals there was the cunning serpent, who was envious of the happiness of Adam and Eve, so he came to Eve and said : “ Has God said that you are not to eat of any of the fruit of the garden ? ” The woman replied, in her innocence : “ Of the fruits of the trees of the garden we may eat, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said we may not eat ” ; and she added, “ Neither may we touch it, lest we die.” But the serpent knew how to arouse her curiosity and how to tempt her. And he said : “ You shall not die, but your eyes will be opened and you will know what is good and what is evil.” The woman, in her innocence, trusted in the serpent’s word, and, forgetting the command of God, stretched out her hand ; and when she saw



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"THE SERPENT . . . SAID UNTO THE WOMAN, 'YEA, HATH GOD SAID, YE SHALL NOT EAT OF EVERY TREE OF THE GARDEN?' " Gen. iii. 1.

that the fruit was good to eat and a delight to the eye, and being desirous of becoming wise, she took of it and ate. Her eyes were opened, and she at once knew that what she had done was not good but evil, and that she had disobeyed the commandment of God. Then she took of the fruit and gave Adam to eat of it, and his eyes also became opened. Fear and remorse seized him, and they hid away amongst the trees in the garden.

It was in the cool of the afternoon that the Voice of the Lord was heard travelling through the garden. And the Lord called Adam and said, "Where art thou?" And Adam and Eve came forth at the bidding of the Lord, and said, "We heard Your Voice and we hid ourselves, for we were naked and ashamed to show ourselves." And the Lord, Who knew what they had done, said to them, "Who told you that you were naked? Truly you must have eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which I had forbidden you." Adam tried to excuse himself, and put the blame upon the woman. And he said, "The woman Thou hast given me, she gave me of the fruit, and I ate it." And the woman, in her turn, tried to excuse herself and said, "The serpent beguiled me."

Then God took pity on them, and He did not punish them so severely as He had threatened. He tempered His justice with mercy, for God loved all that He had made. Instead of killing them at once, He allowed them to live long enough to people the earth with their children, and then die. They had been created mortal, and as they had not eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Life they would in any case not live for ever, but they would no longer be allowed to stay in Paradise. By their disobedience they had forfeited the happiness of that life. Yet in the life outside Paradise God's love would not forsake them. And even in their punishment they could find comfort and joy.

God was most severe with the serpent, for it had brought all that evil upon them. It was now to crawl upon the ground and mingle dust with its food. But when it attempted again to hurt the children of Eve, and try to wound the heel, man should be able to crush its head.

To the woman God promised the joy of Motherhood, but there should be also with it an increase of sorrow. The rearing of children would cause her great suffering and pain. But she would find consolation in the love of her husband.

And to Adam God said, that if he tilled the ground he would be sure to obtain food, though by the sweat of his brow. For otherwise the earth would grow nothing else but thistles and thorns, so he must work very hard. And when his time of death would come, he would return again to the earth from which he had been taken. Through heavy work, sorrow and grief, trial and pain, suffering and bitter experience, man would attain slowly and painfully that knowledge of good and evil which Adam and Eve, in their disobedience to God's orders and listening to the whisperings of the cunning serpent of passion and temptation, had tried to snatch at once from the tree which grew in the beautiful garden.

Adam and Eve were now turned out from the Garden of Eden, and Angels



"*And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.*" Gen. iv. 16.

carrying flaming swords guarded the entrance henceforth, closing the road to the Tree of Everlasting Life.

So they began a new life, totally different from that which they left behind. Two sons were born to them, Cain and Abel. Cain, the elder one, followed the example of his father and tilled the ground, and Abel tended the sheep. One day they brought offerings to God. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the choice firstlings of his flock. God turned favourably towards the offering of Abel, and turned away from the offering of Cain. Cain did not wait to ask for the reason, but at once allowed his anger to master him. And God said to him, "Why art thou wroth if thou art doing right? Sin lies at thine own door if thou doest wrong, but it is for thee to master it." And Cain told this to Abel; yet when they were alone in the field he rose up and slew Abel. When God saw this wild deed, He asked Cain, "Where is thy brother?" but Cain replied sullenly, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" He believed he could hide his deed from God, but God replied, "The blood of thy brother is crying from the earth which has now been defiled. It shall yield no fruit to thee. In vain shalt thou till it. Thou shalt wander from place to place, unsteady and restless." When Cain heard these words of God, he said the punishment was greater than he could bear, and that when wandering about without God's protection, should he meet anyone, they might do to him that which he had done to his brother Abel. Then God placed a mark upon him which would save him from being slain.

Thus the first two children filled the hearts of Adam and Eve with sorrow and grief.

And Cain wandered far away into a distant land, where he was allowed at last sufficient rest to build himself a town and to dwell therein. This was the very first town which was ever made. And Cain had children and grandchildren up to seven generations, after which they ceased to exist. Among them was Lamech, who had three sons: one, Jabel, was the first to teach those who tended the cattle and flocks, to dwell in tents; another, Jubal, invented the



CAIN AND ABEL AT WORK

play upon harp, organ and pipe ; and a third, Tubal-Cain, was the first to forge weapons and tools out of brass and iron.

After a hundred and thirty years God took pity on Adam and Eve and gave them another son, called Seth, who was very much like them ; and Adam became the father of all mankind, for Seth had many children, who multiplied and became exceedingly numerous. Some of them followed the ways of Cain, others followed the ways of Seth, who taught them to call upon the Name of the Lord. Such a man was Enoch, who walked with the Lord ; yet in spite of Enoch's example, men broke God's laws, and people went their own way and did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the whole world became wicked. The land was not properly tended, and the earth did not yield its fruit.

And when God saw the wickedness of men and that they were thinking only of evil deeds continually, He was grieved in His heart ; and yet He took pity on them and granted them one hundred and twenty years that they might repent and mend their ways. But they went on increasing in violence and evil, and God then decided to destroy all the creatures which had corrupted their ways.

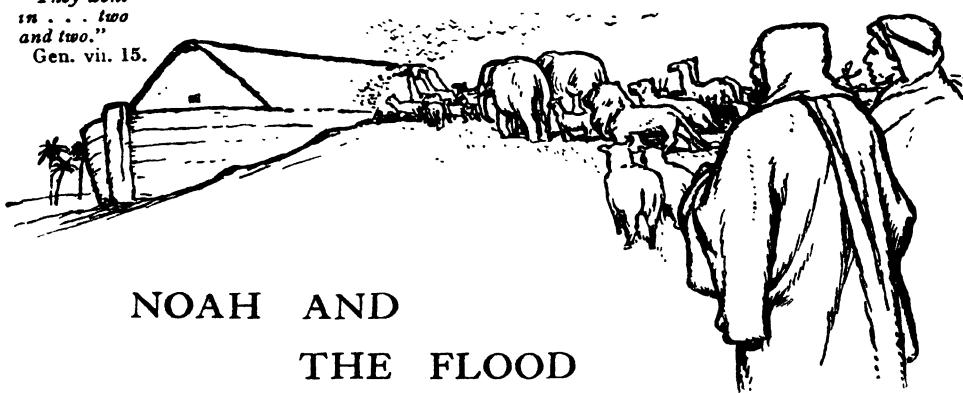
“ And ye shall not seek after your own heart and shall not go astray.”—
NUM. xv. 39 (Author's Version).



“ Jubal . . . the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” Gen. iv. 21.

*"They went
in . . . two
and two."*

Gen. vii. 15.



NOAH AND THE FLOOD

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark."—GEN. VIII. 1.

In this time of general corruption there lived a man who was righteous and wholehearted and walked with God. His name was Noah. He found favour in the sight of God, and God singled him out to save him, and with him all the living creatures who were hereafter to fill again the world after it had been destroyed. For a great flood would sweep over the land, and nothing would escape, but every living thing would be blotted out. And so God ordered Noah to make himself an Ark, a huge wooden ship, covered from without and from within with pitch, so that the water should not be able to enter into it when it should float upon the surface of the waters. The Ark was to be divided into different compartments, for Noah was to take with him into it pairs of animals fit for food and animals not fit for food, and beasts and birds, in order to keep them alive until the flood had disappeared. When the appointed time came, then the fountains of the deep opened and the waters rushed out from under the earth, and the windows of the heavens were opened, and the rain poured down incessantly for forty days and



"AND NOAH BUILDED AN ALTAR UNTO THE LORD." Gen. viii. 20.

B

forty nights. The flood rose continually until it reached the highest tops of the mountains, and still the rain was pouring down, and the waters rose higher and higher until even the tops of the highest mountains disappeared under the waves. A strong wind blew, and the ship was tossed to and fro, and Noah and all the inmates of the ship were in great danger, but God did not forsake them. He protected them with His Love ; and when all living creatures had disappeared, the wind subsided and the waves grew calm, and the ship floated quietly on the surface of the waters. The rain stopped, and slowly the waters began to subside, and the peaks of the mountains again became visible, and the ship then rested on Mount Ararat.

It took, however, many months before this flood had really subsided, and Noah, impatient to know whether the land was already visible, so that he might leave the Ark, opened the window and sent out a raven to bring him the message, but the raven never returned. Noah waited a week for him, and then he sent out a dove. The dove returned without any message. Noah waited patiently for another week, and again he sent out the dove, but this time the dove came back with a leaf of an olive tree in her beak. This was a clear sign that the water was disappearing, and that the tree-tops were showing above them. Still Noah waited for the command of God. He would not leave the Ark into which he had gone by the command of God, so as to be saved from destruction, until ordered by Him, when he knew that it would be safe for him to leave it. At last a command came, and he and his wife and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with their wives, and all the animals and beasts and birds—all the living creatures that were with him—left the Ark together. They came into a new world, which was to be different from that which they had left behind when they had entered the Ark.

The first thing Noah did was to offer thanksgivings to God for the marvellous manner in which they all had been saved.

God accepted his thanks, and comforted him, lest he should be troubled by the thought that another flood would in a similar

manner again destroy all the work of man, together with mankind ; and God said to him that He would never again bring such a flood upon the world : that the order of Nature should not be interrupted, and that season should follow season in its regular course, day should follow night and heat alternate with cold ; reaping should come after sowing, and summer and winter and all the seasons of the year should never cease to follow upon one another ; and when thick clouds rolled up and covered the heavens threateningly, then a beautiful rainbow would appear spanning the earth as a sign that the love of God also spans the earth.

And the Lord blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them : “ Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” And God gave them dominion over everything, as He had given Adam, and all moving things were given unto them for food, even as the green herb. “ But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.” And God warned them against bloodshed and murder.

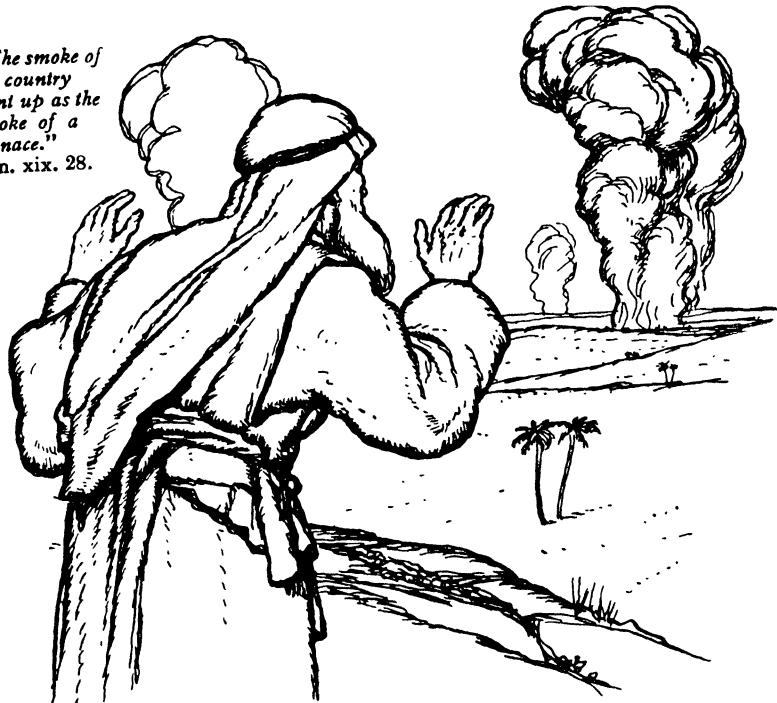
Years passed, and the children of Noah grew very numerous. The memory of the flood was still very strong among them, and they kept together and travelled until they settled in a valley, in the land of Shinar.

But soon, in their pride, they began to build a tower whose top should reach unto heaven. This displeased the Lord, and He caused them to speak in different languages, so that they could no longer understand one another. Then they left off building and were scattered over the earth.

And the tower was called the Tower of Babel. And there was a King of Babel named Nimrod, who was a valiant man and a mighty hunter before the Lord.

“ The wicked are overthrown, and are not : but the house of the righteous shall stand.”—PROV. XII. 7.

*"The smoke of
the country
went up as the
smoke of a
furnace."*
Gen. xix. 28.



ABRAHAM AND THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

"In blessing I will bless thee."—GEN. xxii. 17.

Close upon three hundred years had passed since the flood had swept the earth, when a son was born to Terah, one of the descendants of the house of Shem. He lived then in the town Ur of the Chaldees, and the son's name was Abraham.

When Abraham had reached the age of seventy-five years, the word of God came to him to leave his country and his father's house, and to go into that land which God had chosen. Full of trust and faith, Abraham followed God's command, and went into the land of Canaan, together with his wife and his nephew Lot, and a number of persons whose affection he had been able to win when he was staying in Haran. For he was a man gentle of nature



Painted by Leon La Fosse

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

and full of love and compassion for his fellow-creatures, hospitable, kind of heart, upright and true, and withal God-fearing. And God had promised him that he would be a blessing to the nations. So he went into the land of Canaan proclaiming the Name of God, teaching everywhere the love and fear of the Highest One.

One day Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, when lo ! three men stood before him. It was Abraham's custom to wait in the very heat of the noontide for weary travellers to pass by. He would stop them, offer them hospitality, refresh them, and then let them go with a feeling of gratitude for his loving kindness. He at once invited the three men to rest under the shadow of the trees, to wash their tired feet, and partake of a meal which he would prepare for them. After they had refreshed themselves, they said to Abraham, "A year hence a son shall be granted to you." Sarah, his wife, standing inside the tent, heard this message from behind the door, and she smiled incredulously, for she and Abraham had been married many years and were old, and had given up all hopes of having a child. But the angel—for these men were angels—said, "Why did Sarah smile incredulously ? Is there anything too wonderful for God to do ?" When Abraham's guests departed he accompanied them for a short distance on their way.

Then Abraham was told of the terrible doom which was now awaiting the wicked and the inhospitable people of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, and others who through their evil deeds had forfeited the mercy of God. But Abraham was full of compassion for these sinners, and though knowing the righteousness of God's judgment, he commenced entreating God's forgiveness, if only fifty upright and good people could be found in these cities. And God granted his request. Then Abraham, doubtful whether so many could be found, again prayed for forgiveness if a smaller number could be found, and God again hearkened to his prayer ; and then Abraham, ever fearful lest even so small a number could not be found, slowly reduced it to ten, and even then God's mercy would have prevailed over His judgment, but not even ten could be found.

When the time drew near that fire from heaven would burn down the two wicked cities, there came angels to Lot, Abraham's nephew who dwelt in Sodom, and they took Lot and his wife and his two daughters and hurried them to a place of safety, warning them not to look behind. But Lot's wife could not forbear looking back, and suddenly she was covered with salt, and she became like a pillar of salt. Abraham had risen early to see whether at least ten righteous men had been found in those cities, which number would be sufficient to save them, but he only saw smoke rising up from the place where the cities had stood before. They had all disappeared.

A year went by, and the little child promised by the angel was born unto Abraham and Sarah his wife. And there were great rejoicings, and he was named Isaac, which means "Laughter," for Sarah said, "God hath made me to laugh."

Soon after this the faith of Abraham was to be put to a very severe test. He was to prove his unbounded confidence and trust in God even at the greatest possible sacrifice to himself. It was customary at that time among some nations to bring human sacrifices to their gods, even their own children. Abraham therefore received meekly the command of God that he should take his only son and offer him up as a sacrifice upon one of the mountains which God would show him. He rose early, took the lad and his servants with him, and, carrying even the fire, he went on his sad errand. On the third day he saw the mountain from afar, and leaving his servants behind, he and the lad walked up to the mountain alone. Isaac asked where the lamb for the sacrifice was, as they had brought everything with them necessary for it. And Abraham trustfully replied, "The Lord will provide a lamb, my son." Arrived at the appointed spot, he built up the altar, split the wood and arranged it carefully; then he bound his son, and put him on the altar. But when he drew the knife, a voice from Heaven called out, saying, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad." For Abraham had now made known how strong was his faith in God, in that he did not even withhold his only son from Him. He had submitted cheerfully to the severest test, for God did not really wish for such sacrifices.



"ABRAHAM WENT AND TOOK THE RAM." Gen. xxii. 13.

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Then Abraham, turning round, saw a ram caught by its horns in the thicket, and he took this and offered it up as the sacrifice instead of his son. And again God blessed him, saying, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice." And Abraham returned safely home to Beersheba.

"The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants."—Ps. xxxiv. 22.

ELIEZER AND REBEKAH

"The Lord hath prospered my way."—GEN. xxiv. 56.

Some time afterwards Abraham's beloved wife, Sarah, was taken away from him. She died when she was one hundred and twenty-seven years old. And Abraham purchased from the Hittites in Hebron a burial-place for himself and his family—the Double Cave, or Cave of Machpelah.

And Abraham grew old and stricken in years. He had learned to know the ways of the Canaanites, and dreaded lest Isaac would marry one of them and perchance forfeit God's blessing and His promise to give to his seed alone the land of the Canaanites. So he called his steward, Eliezer, and made him take an oath that he would go to Abraham's country, and bring back a wife for his son from among Abraham's kinsfolk. Abraham knew that God would prosper Eliezer's way, and guide him in the choice of a maiden.

Eliezer obeyed his master's command, and travelled a long time until he came at last to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, the brother of Abraham. Weary and tired through the long journey, he sat down by the well. It was eventide, when the women used to come out to draw water, so he caused his camels to kneel down while he stood up in prayer to the God of his master, to help him to find the maiden fit to be the wife of Isaac. He remembered his master's hospitality and kindness of heart, and he prayed that the young woman might also be kindhearted and good; and he said: "If I should ask for drink, and the maiden reply, 'Drink, and I will



REBEKAH AND ELIEZER AT THE WELL

give thy camels also drink,' then I shall know that God has prospered my way, for she will show love for the stranger and love for the dumb animals."

While he was praying there came Rebekah, the grand-daughter of Nahor, with a pitcher on her shoulder. She drew water from the well and filled her pitcher. Eliezer approached her and asked

her to give him drink. She replied at once, "Drink, and I will give thy camels also drink," and she filled a trough. Then Eliezer asked her who she was, and whether he could tarry that night in their house. She told him her name, and when he heard he bowed his head and said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Abraham my master, Who hath not forsaken His mercy and truth towards my master, and has led me to my master's family."

Then Rebekah ran home to tell her parents and her brother Laban what had happened to her by the well. Laban came out quickly, and brought Eliezer and his men to the house. Eliezer saw that God had prospered his way. He therefore would not waste time, but at once told the errand on which he had come, and how he had found Rebekah. And he asked them to allow her to come with him to be the wife of Isaac. Bethuel, her father, who



"She . . . let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink." Gen. xxiv. 18.

saw that the thing proceeded from the Lord, did not wish to oppose, neither did he like to consent ; he therefore left it entirely to Rebekah to decide. She expressed her willingness to go with Eliezer, and on the very next morning they departed on their journey, followed by the blessings of her mother and her brother Laban.

When they reached the place where Isaac dwelt, they met him out in the fields. Overcome by a feeling of modesty, Rebekah covered her face with a veil. And Isaac took her into his mother's tent, and Rebekah became his wife.

"Whoso findeth a wife and findeth happiness obtaineth abundant favours of the Lord."—PROV. xviii. 22 (Author's Version).

JACOB AND THE LADDER OF ANGELS

"Behold, I am with thee."—GEN. xxviii. 15.

Isaac married Rebekah and had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was a quiet, peace-loving man, and Esau a wild huntsman. Rebekah loved Jacob, and Isaac favoured Esau.

When Isaac grew old his eyes became dim and he could not see. One day he asked Esau to bring him some venison to eat, for he wanted to give him a special blessing.

But while Esau had gone to hunt for deer, Rebekah, who loved Jacob, took two kids and cooked them in such a way that they should taste like venison, and she put the skin of the kids on Jacob's hands and neck, so that he should seem rough and hairy like Esau, and then she sent him with the savoury meat to Isaac. When Esau came in with his venison and found that his brother had, by deceit, gained the blessing which was meant for him, he was very angry with his brother, and determined to kill him. So by the advice of his mother, and with the blessing of his father, Jacob went away to seek safety with his mother's brother Laban.

Warned by his mother, Jacob left stealthily, avoided the high-road, and travelled by side routes, until one day when the sun was

setting he found himself in a lonely place, where he tarried over-night. He did not know that, though he believed himself alone, God was near him. Tired and weary, he laid himself down to sleep, resting his head against a stone. Then as he dreamed he saw a wonderful sight. He saw a ladder standing upon the earth and the top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God going up and down the ladder, and God Himself stood by him and repeated the promise and the blessing which He had given to his grandfather Abraham, that his children should be as numerous as the dust of the earth and that they should inherit the land, and that through him and in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. When Jacob awoke in the morning, he said : " Surely God is also here, and I knew it not, and although it is a place desolate and full of awe, yet it is the gate of Heaven." He took the stone which had served him as a pillow, raised it up as a monument, and poured oil over it, and he vowed a vow that if God would further protect him and provide for him, then he would surely set aside a tenth part of what he possessed for the service of God. And he called that place Bethel, " The House of God."

Strengthened by God's promise, Jacob continued his



"Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau" Gen. xxvii. 21.

journey until he came to Haran. There he found the flocks gathered round the well, and the shepherds standing by idly watching. Jacob asked them whence they were, and when he heard that they were from Haran, he asked them why they were tarrying there, and whether they knew Laban. They replied that they had to wait until a larger number of shepherds had come to roll away the heavy stone from the mouth of the well ; and as for Laban, his daughter Rachel was coming with the flock. Jacob was very strong, in spite of his meek disposition, and he rolled the stone away alone, and then went to meet Rachel, his cousin. He told her who he was, and embraced and kissed her, and seeing the position in which he found himself he wept bitterly. Rachel ran and told her father that Jacob had come. Laban at once invited him to the house, where he stayed for a month. At the end of that time, Laban, who had meanwhile recognized the qualities of Jacob, asked him to enter into his service, and promised him wages. Jacob agreed to serve Laban, but as return for his service he would have no wages, but would ask Laban to give him Rachel to wife, for Rachel was beautiful, and Jacob had fallen in love with her. He was willing to serve seven years for her. Laban agreed, and these seven years passed in Jacob's eyes as a few days through the great love he had for her. But Laban did not wish to lose the services of Jacob, and he tricked him. He had two daughters, one Leah, the "tender-eyed," and Rachel, the "beautiful." He covered Leah's face with a veil and married her to Jacob, causing Jacob to believe that he was marrying Rachel. When Jacob found that he had been deceived, Laban pleaded as an excuse that it was not customary to marry the younger daughter before the elder, and if Jacob would again serve for another seven years, he could have Rachel as his wife. Jacob willingly consented, and he married Rachel soon afterwards and then served Laban for her for seven years. And children were born to Jacob. When the fourteen years came to an end, Jacob asked Laban to fix his wages if he wished him to tend his flocks any longer, for Jacob was anxious to provide for his own house. When Jacob had first come, Laban had been comparatively poor



"BEHOLD THE ANGELS OF GOD ASCENDING AND DESCENDING." Gen. xxviii. 12.



"Rachel came with her father's sheep." Gen. xxix. 9.

goats which would be born with specks and spots upon them ; all the others should remain for Laban.

Within six years he had earned so much that he was able to buy himself other flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, camels and asses, manservants and maidservants. This excited the envy of Laban's sons, who succeeded in estranging Laban from Jacob still more. They insinuated that Jacob had taken advantage of Laban's confidence, and had wrongly appropriated their father's riches. Jacob saw the changed demeanour of Laban, and he feared that Laban might rob him of everything for which he had worked so hard. He did not know what to do, when the Voice of God came to him telling him to return to his father's house in the land of Canaan,

and had only a few flocks and herds ; but the zeal and care of Jacob had brought blessings to him, and he became very rich. He knew that God had blessed him for Jacob's sake, and was therefore unwilling to let him go. But in his mind he determined to cheat him. Jacob, who knew Laban's character, tried to make such an arrangement that Laban could not alter it. He asked therefore that the flocks and herds be divided, and that his wages should consist only of such sheep and

and promising to be with him and protect him. Thus encouraged by the promise of God, Jacob took his family and property and returned to Canaan. There his brother Esau came out to meet him. And Esau fell on Jacob's neck and kissed him. And so they met in friendship, and Jacob gave Esau rich presents, and went peacefully on his way. And thus travelling, he came to Hebron, where his father dwelt.

"Better trust in the Lord than put your confidence in man."—Ps. cxviii. 18
(Author's Version).

JOSEPH AND HIS DREAMS

"The Lord was with him."—GEN. xxxix. 3.

Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter. Of these thirteen children, only two were born of his beloved wife Rachel. One, Joseph, was born in the house of Laban, and in Canaan another, whose name was Benjamin. Rachel died when she gave birth to Benjamin, and was buried in Bethlehem on the road to Hebron. Now, Joseph was the beloved son of his father, being the first-born of his wife Rachel, for whom he had served fourteen years. And Jacob dressed him in fine clothes, and gave him a multicoloured coat like that of a chieftain, and kept him always near him in the house. This marked preference which his father showed caused the envy of his brothers, especially the sons of Leah. They shunned his company when they went out to tend their flocks, and he remained as a lad of seventeen years only with the sons of the handmaids of Jacob. He told his father of the unkind behaviour of the other brothers, and they hated him for it.

They feared that Jacob might give the right of first-born to Joseph, the elder son of Rachel, in preference to the first-born of Leah. Joseph, who was a dreamer of dreams, also involuntarily encouraged their suspicions and increased their envy. One night he saw in his dream that they were all cutting the corn in the field

together and binding it in sheaves, when lo ! his sheaf stood upright, and the sheaves of his brothers were bowing down before his sheaf. He told this dream to the brothers, and they replied, " Does this mean that thou art going to rule over us ?" Then again, he dreamed that the sun and the moon and eleven stars were paying homage to him, and even his father rebuked him when he heard this dream, for he said, " And are thy father and thy mother and thy brothers coming to bow down before thee ?" Still, his father remembered this incident, but his brothers hated him the more for it.

One day his elder brothers had gone far away with their flocks, a distance of three days' journey. Jacob became anxious and sent Joseph to inquire of their whereabouts. He went to the old pasture-place, but they had gone ; and Joseph met a man on the road, and asked him whether he had seen the brothers, and he replied that they had gone to a place farther on, called the " Two Wells." Joseph went in the direction he indicated. His brothers espied him from afar, and they said to one another, " Behold, my lord the Dreamer is coming. Let us kill him, and we shall see what will come of his dreams." But Reuben, the first-born of Leah and the eldest amongst them, would not allow them to murder their brother, and he asked them to fling him into one of the two wells, which happened to be dry. He hoped afterwards secretly to remove him from it and to bring him back to his father. So when Joseph came near, they stripped him of his beautiful coat and cast him into the well, and then sat down to their meal. At that time they suddenly saw a caravan of Ishmaelite and Midianite traders coming along, their camels laden with all kinds of spices which they were carrying to Egypt. Then Judah, who feared that they might after all kill Joseph, induced them to sell their brother as a slave to these traders. They agreed : Joseph was dragged out of the well and sold to the men, who carried him to Egypt. There they sold him as a slave to Potiphar, the General of the Bodyguard of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. Pharaoh was the name of the Egyptian Kings.

When the Ishmaelites had departed with Joseph, the brothers



"COME NOW THEREFORE, AND LET US SLAY HIM." Gen. xxxvii. 20.

remembered that their father was waiting for the return of the lad, so they slaughtered a kid, soaked the robe of which they had stripped Joseph in the blood, and sent it to the father, asking whether he could recognize in it Joseph's coat. He at once saw that it was Joseph's coat, and exclaimed, "Joseph has been torn to pieces! a wild beast has killed him." And he mourned over the loss of his son, and would accept no comfort from anyone. He spent his days in grief and mourning.

Joseph was a fair and comely lad, and God was with him. Whatever he did prospered. He found favour in the eyes of his master, and he served him so faithfully that his master placed everything he possessed in his hands, and never inquired after anything except for the food which he ate. The wife of Potiphar, brought up in the evil ways of the Egyptians, cast her eyes upon Joseph, and tried in vain to entice him to commit a grave sin. But he was loyal to his master, and he knew that sin was displeasing to God. He steadfastly refused to listen to her, whereupon in her rage she accused the innocent Joseph of having committed the very sin which he had refused to commit. His master thought that his confidence had been shamefully betrayed, and cast Joseph into a dungeon, a place where the officers of state were kept as prisoners. But even there God was with Joseph, and he found favour with the governor of the prison, who made him the overseer of all the prisoners.

One day the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh were accused of an offence against the king, and they were sent to the prison where Joseph was. Entering their dungeon some time afterwards, Joseph found them looking very sad and distressed. He asked them for a reason, and they told him: "We both dreamed last night that which seems to be one dream, but in two appearances, each one according to his station and occupation, but there is none who can explain it to us and tell us its meaning." And Joseph replied, "God alone can give us the true interpretation, but let me hear it." So the chief butler said that he had seen in his dream a vine growing, out of which three branches spread, and there slowly the clusters of grapes grew and ripened. He took some



JOSEPH TELLS HIS DREAM

of these, crushed them into the wine cup, and handed it to Pharaoh to drink. And Joseph told him that this signified that within three days he would be restored to his former position to be the chief butler to Pharaoh. And he told him that when once restored to his former position to remember the lad who had been treacherously stolen away from a foreign country,



"His brethren . . . sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites." Gen. xxxvii. 27, 28.

and, though innocent, cast into prison. When the chief baker heard the favourable interpretation of the butler's dream, he said to Joseph : "I have dreamt a similar dream. I carried on my head three baskets, and in the uppermost were some of the best cakes, and the birds of heaven were picking them." And Joseph said : "The dream is similar ; in three days thy fate will be decided, but Pharaoh will hang thee on the gallows, and the birds of heaven will pick thy flesh." And as Joseph had interpreted the dreams, so they came to pass. Within the next three days the innocence of the butler and the guilt of the baker were discovered, and, it being the birthday of Pharaoh, the butler was restored to his former position, and the baker hanged on the gallows. Once free and happy, however, the butler forgot Joseph and the dungeon.



Two years passed, and dreamed a dream. He dreamed that he was standing by the banks of a river, and there came out seven fat and well-covered cows, which were browsing on the rushes. After them came another seven cows poor to look upon and lean of flesh. And whilst he was watching, the lean cows ate up the fat ones, and he could not see whither they had

gone, for the lean cows remained as miserable and wretched as before. He woke up. He fell asleep and dreamed again, and he saw seven ears of corn spring from one stalk, each full and good. And another seven ears of corn sprang up on one stalk withered and blasted by the east wind. And they destroyed the seven good and full ears. And he awoke and it was a dream. But he was greatly distressed by the visions, and in the morning he sent for his wise men to explain to him the meaning. But they could not. Then the chief butler stepped forward and said: "I remember the time when I offended against Pharaoh and I was put into prison. And there was with us a lad from a foreign country. There I dreamed a dream, and he explained it to me, as well as to the chief baker who was with me. And as he explained it to us, so it came to pass. Perchance he may now also be able to explain the dream of Pharaoh." When Pharaoh

heard of it he at once sent for Joseph. They took him from the prison, shaved him, clothed him, and brought him before the king, who said to him : " I understand that thou knowest how to interpret dreams." But Joseph modestly replied : " It is only through God that dreams can be interpreted." Then Pharaoh told him what he had seen in his dream, and Joseph said : " This dream is a singular one, but it has been sent by God to tell Pharaoh what is going to happen. The seven fat cows as well as the good and full ears of corn signify seven years of plenty. These will be followed by seven years of famine and starvation, in which the seven years of plenty will be entirely forgotten. They will swallow them up as the lean cows swallowed up the fat cows and as the blighted ears destroyed the full ones. For the repetition of the dream means that God is sure to effect it." Pharaoh and his Ministers were greatly pleased with the reply. And Joseph then went on to advise Pharaoh how to prepare to meet the calamity. He told him to appoint a firm and wise man who would gather up as much corn as could be spared during the seven years of plenty, and store it away in the towns and fortresses for the years of famine. And Pharaoh said : " Surely there is no man more wise and understanding than thou art, for in thee also is the spirit of God." And he appointed him to be the master over Egypt only one degree below the throne. Nothing should be done without Joseph's direction and administration. He took the ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's, dressed him in magnificent robes with a golden chain round his neck, and had him publicly acclaimed as the effective ruler of Egypt.

Joseph married Asenath, the daughter of one of the high officials, from whom he had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Joseph surveyed the land of Egypt, and divided it up into several sections, and established granaries in every province, wherein he gathered the surplus crops of the seven years of plenty. The years of famine now drew near. Joseph had gathered up so much that he was able to provide not only for the people of Egypt, but also for those who came from the neighbouring countries to buy corn.

There was famine also in Canaan, where Jacob and his

family dwelt, for the crops of the earth had failed. Only the trees yielded some fruit, and a little of the balm was still oozing from them, but the fruit was scanty, and the people of the land suffered greatly from the famine. It was then that Jacob heard that corn was to be had in Egypt, and he sent ten of his sons to bring corn for the family. But he kept Benjamin at home, for he said, "Who knows, perhaps an accident may happen to him on the way," and now that Joseph had disappeared he was afraid of losing also Benjamin, the only surviving son of his beloved wife Rachel. So they went down to Egypt. They were brought before Joseph, who alone gave directions for the distribution of the corn, and without whose permission nothing could be done. They prostrated themselves before him, and when he saw them he recognized them. But they never dreamed of finding their lost brother Joseph in the all-powerful master of Egypt. He spoke harshly to them, for he wanted to make himself strange to them. He asked them whence they had come and what had brought them to Egypt. They replied that they had come from the famine-stricken Canaan to buy corn. But he replied that they had come as spies to find out the weakness of the land, for it was now disturbed through famine and starvation. Then they said that they were all of them members of only one family, sons of one father, not as he might have suspected, heads of various tribes ; and that in fact they had been more numerous still—they had been twelve, but one had disappeared and one was with the old father, who was still alive. Joseph pretended not to believe them. At last he consented to grant them the corn, but on two conditions : that one of them should remain behind as a hostage, and they should bring their youngest brother with them when they again came to Egypt. They accepted the conditions, and returned home with food which would last them for a time. When they came home they told their father all that had happened to them in Egypt, and of the conditions on which the master of Egypt had allowed them to obtain corn for the family. Jacob greatly lamented their promise, and only after Judah had pledged himself personally for the safety of the lad did

Jacob consent to Benjamin accompanying them on their second journey to Egypt. He also sent Joseph some gifts of the fruits of the land, such as a little balm, a little wild honey, spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds. Joseph had insisted upon their bringing Benjamin with them, for after all he had

suffered at the hands of his brethren, he was anxious to satisfy himself as to the manner in which they treated his brother.

When they reached Egypt they presented themselves again before Joseph, who was overcome with deep emotion on seeing his younger brother; but he mastered himself and asked first after the old father, and then welcomed his younger brother with a special greeting "that God may favour him." They were then invited to take their meal with Joseph at his house. He always ate at a separate table, for the Egyptians objected to dining together with foreigners, and Joseph sat by himself at his own table. He sent his brother special dishes, and marked out Benjamin for quite exceptional favour. After the repast Joseph ordered the steward of his house to fill their sacks with corn, and to take his own special cup and hide it in Benjamin's sack. In the coolness of the morning





"The cup was found in Benjamin's sack." Gen. xliv. 12.

all the eleven brothers departed together, but they had scarcely left the precincts of the town before the steward of Joseph's household overtook them and charged them with ingratitude, for he alleged that they had returned evil for good, inasmuch as they had stolen

Joseph's cup, a special cup from which he alone drank. The brethren were greatly distressed at this accusation, and asked him to search among their sacks, and said that in whosoever's sack that cup were found, he should be killed, whilst the others would all serve as slaves to Joseph. The steward then started his search. He began with the eldest and finished with the sack of Benjamin, the youngest. To their great consternation, the cup was in Benjamin's sack. When they saw what had happened they felt that punishment had overtaken them for their guilt. Already when first charged with being spies they remembered what they had done to their poor brother Joseph, and felt keen remorse at the guiltless blood which they believed they had shed. Now they tore their clothes, and with despair in their hearts, they returned to

Joseph, who was still waiting for them in his house. To his rebuke at their evil deed, they plaintively replied : "What shall we say ? How shall we justify ourselves ? God has found out our sinfulness. We all take the full responsibility, and we are all willing to serve as slaves." But Joseph, who wanted to test their loyalty and devotion to their brother to the uttermost, replied : "Only he who has stolen is to remain a slave with me. You may all go home free." Then Judah, who remembered that by his advice Joseph had been sold into slavery, rose up and said that he had pledged himself for the safety of Benjamin, and that he would willingly remain as a slave if Benjamin could return home. He could not endure the thought of his old father's renewed grief and sorrow. When Joseph saw to what length he was prepared to protect and shield Benjamin, he could no longer contain himself, and he said : "I am Joseph, whom you sold into slavery ; but fear not, for though you may have thought it for evil, God has thought it for good. It was the Divine plan that I should be brought down to Egypt, for I am now keeping alive a vast multitude of men." At these words they were so much overcome with astonishment, remorse and joy, that they wept aloud—so loud that it was heard without, until the report of it reached the ears of Pharaoh. And Joseph said to them : "Go and bring our old father and your families hither, for there will be still many years of famine in the land ; but being near and living in the neighbouring province of Goshen, I shall be able to provide for you more easily." Pharaoh also approved of the wish of Joseph to bring his family to dwell with him in the land of Goshen. Joseph then sent waggons and mules and all that was necessary to make their journey easy from Canaan to Egypt. He gave them also handsome parting gifts and rich garments, but those which he gave to Benjamin were five times more precious. They returned to Canaan now in a different spirit from that in which they had gone down to Egypt. They were full of joy at the glad tidings they would bring to Jacob, to whom they all came back, even the one who had been kept as a hostage in Egypt. It took some time before Jacob could believe that his son Joseph was indeed alive, and

though already advanced in age and bowed down by the many trials and troubles he had undergone, he did not hesitate to go down to Egypt. And he was fortified in his decision by the Divine promise that God would not forsake him—nay, that God would go down with him to Egypt, where he would become a mighty nation, and that afterwards He would bring him up from Egypt once more.

The children of Jacob, henceforth called the children of Israel, dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the province of Goshen, and they multiplied and became exceedingly powerful.

“He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.”—Ps. xxxii. 10.

THE BIRTH OF MOSES

“And I am come to deliver them.”—Exod. iii. 8 (Author’s Version).

Years passed by. A new king arose in Egypt from a different dynasty, who would not remember Joseph and all he had done for Egypt. He pretended to be afraid of the Israelites, and he called his men together and said to them : “Let us deal cunningly with these people, for they have grown numerous and strong, and should war occur they might turn from us and join our enemies and drive us out of the land. Let us crush them by making slaves of them, and putting them to hard work.” So they forced the children of Israel to work in the brick kilns, and in all manner of heavy work, besides the work in the fields. And the Israelites built for the Egyptians fortresses like Pithom and Raamses.

But in spite of the oppression, the Israelites multiplied and filled the land. So at last the king sent orders throughout the land that the Egyptians should search for all the male babes of the children of Israel, and cast them into the river.

At that time there lived a man of the house of Levi called Amram, who married Jochebed of the same noble house. They had had a son and a daughter, called Aaron and Miriam, before the king’s decree had gone forth to kill the male babies. A son was then born to them,

a beautiful child, and the mother hid it for three months. Finding she could no longer hide it, she made a little boat of bulrushes, smeared it with pitch and resin, and placed it in the water among the reeds. It so happened that the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe, and she saw that little boat floating among the reeds. So she sent her maid, who drew it out of the water. And when Pharaoh's daughter opened it, she found in it a little baby, crying. She recognized it at once as being a child of the Hebrews, and took pity on it. Miriam, the babe's sister, who had been watching from the bank of the river, then came near and asked the princess whether she would like her to bring a woman who would nurse the child. The princess was only too pleased, and Miriam ran and brought her mother, to whom the princess said : "Take the child, nurse it, and bring it back to me." Jochebed did as she was requested. She nursed the child, and when it was old enough she brought the baby to the palace of the king's daughter, who adopted him as her son and called him Moses, which meant in her language "drawn out," because she had drawn him out of the water.

And there Moses grew up whilst his brethren were groaning under the heavy burden of persecution.



"When she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes
Exod. ii. 3.



"MOSES . . SPIED AN EGYPTIAN SMITING AN HEBREW." Exod. ii. 11.

They cried to God out of their sufferings and sorrow, and God listened.

When Moses was grown up, he went out one day to see how his brethren fared, when he came upon an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew. The sight so enraged him that he struck down the Egyptian. On another occasion, being in the midst of the people, he saw two Hebrews fighting, and the wrong doer smiting the other. Moses rebuked him for his evil deed, when the other turned to Moses and said : " Who has placed thee as an overseer over us ? Art thou going to strike me as thou hast done to the Egyptian ? "

When Moses heard these words, he said, " Verily, that matter has gone abroad." And he felt that his life was no longer safe in Egypt ; indeed, Pharaoh sought to kill him. So he fled for safety to the land of Midian.

There it came to pass that he was resting by a well, and the daughters of the priest of Midian came out to draw water from it to pour into the trough for the sheep to drink, when the shepherds near by rose up and drove away the maidens after they had filled the trough. Again Moses could not suffer wrong to be done in his



"Behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."
Exod. iii. 2.

presence, so he came to the rescue of the maidens and drove away the shepherds. The former were able to give their flock to drink at once, and returned quickly home. Their father wondered that they had come home earlier than usual, and asked what had happened. Then they told him how a stranger, an Egyptian—for thus they described Moses—had saved them from the wicked shepherds who had taken advantage of their weakness, and who used to drive them away after they had drawn the water and poured it into the troughs. Jethro, their father, at once sent for Moses, and afterwards gave him Zipporah, his daughter, to wife. Moses was pleased with the hospitality shown to him, and he consented to stay with his father-in-law, Jethro, and take charge of his flocks.

So Moses fed the flocks of his father-in-law for many years, whilst the children of Israel were being greatly oppressed in Egypt.

One day Moses led his sheep far away into the wilderness, near Horeb, when he saw a wonderful thing, a bush enveloped in flames. Surprised at the sight, Moses went near to see more closely how it came to pass that the bush should be enveloped in flames and yet the fire did not burn it, when an angel called to him not to draw near, as the place was holy, but first to take off his shoes and walk as in a sanctuary. Then he heard God speaking, saying to him that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had heard the suffering of His people Israel, and He had answered their prayers. He would now send Moses to bring them out of the land of Egypt into that land which He had promised their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a land large and spacious, flowing with milk and honey. When Moses heard this message, he asked humbly : “ Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should be able to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt ? ” But God said : “ I shall be with you, therefore go, and though it may appear to thee too wonderful, yet as I have sent thee, these people will be delivered, and they will yet serve Me here on this very spot in Horeb.”

Moses, who knew the misery in which the people lived, and how difficult it would be to bring again confidence and hope to them of any deliverance from this slavery and oppression, asked God to tell



THE FINDING OF MOSES

him in whose name he should speak to the people. And God replied, “In the Name of the Everlasting, He Who always is.”

Still Moses was doubtful about the people, and how to win their confidence and belief. And God told him to throw down the rod which he held in his hand ; he did so and it turned into a snake. Ordered by God, Moses took hold of it by its tail, and it became a rod again. And he put his hand into his bosom, and when he drew it out it was white as that of a leper ; he put it again into his bosom, and when he drew it out, his hand was as before. And finally, God told him to pour some water on the ground, and it turned into blood. Then He foretold to Moses some of the wonders and miracles which were going to happen in the land of Egypt before the Israelites would be allowed to leave. For God said to Moses : “Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, will not let you go unless a mighty hand is outstretched against him. He will harden his heart until his pride is humbled and he is forced to let Israel go free.”

Still Moses hesitated to undertake this great task, and he pleaded that he was slow of mouth and heavy of tongue ; whereupon God said to him that his brother Aaron should be the spokesman, and he would only have to put his words into Aaron’s mouth. And Moses went as he was bidden, and was met by Aaron.

“Our fathers trusted in Thee : they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered.”—Ps. xxii. 4, 5.

THE TEN PLAGUES AND THE GOING OUT OF EGYPT

“The Lord shall fight for you.”—EXOD. xiv. 14.

Moses was eighty years old, was deeply versed in all the learning of the Egyptians, and had gathered also wide experience, when God commanded him and Aaron to go back to Pharaoh and to repeat the message, and at the same time to warn him of the consequences of his stubbornness. For God would visit the land with all manner

of signs and wonders, until at last he would recognize that there was no God so great and so mighty as the Ever Living God. Moses and Aaron thereupon appeared at the Court of Pharaoh, and repeated the demand for the deliverance of the children of Israel. As a proof that they were sent by God, Aaron threw his rod upon the ground, which, like the rod of Moses in the wilderness, turned into a serpent. The wise men of Egypt did likewise, but Aaron's rod swallowed all their rods up. But Pharaoh would not listen, and then God sent the ten plagues, one following upon the other in natural sequence.

The first sign which God sent against Pharaoh was that the waters of the river which flowed through Egypt turned into blood. The Egyptians were unable to drink of it, and had to dig wells, although these did not suffice their needs. But Pharaoh remained obdurate ; he paid no heed to the sufferings of the people.

Seven days passed, and God sent Moses to Pharaoh to tell him to let the people go. Should he not hearken to these words, then from the river whose waters had now become foul, frogs would come in vast numbers. Pharaoh did not listen to Moses' admonition, and frogs swarmed all over the land. They entered the houses, went into the inner chambers and jumped on to the bedsteads and into the ovens and troughs. Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said : " Pray to God to take away these frogs from us, and I will let the people go and serve Him."

Moses and Aaron did as Pharaoh had requested, and the frogs died wherever they were, and the people swept them together and made huge heaps of them. When Pharaoh saw that he had been delivered of the plague of frogs, his heart again hardened ; he changed his mind, and would not allow the children of Israel to go.

Then God said to Moses, " Let Aaron stretch out his hand and touch the dust of the earth with his staff." And out of the decaying bodies of the frogs came vermin as numerous as the dust of the earth, and man and beast were covered with them. The priests, who were versed in the ancient magic of Egypt, tried to produce such vermin as well, in order to show Pharaoh that their gods had the same power as the God of Moses and Aaron, and that he therefore need not hearken to

their message; but they failed because their magic was only delusion, and they themselves were covered with the lice and other vermin.

Still Pharaoh did not listen. So God told Moses : " Go, rise up early and meet Pharaoh when he goes down to the river, and warn him, saying, ' Let the people go, for otherwise I will send swarms of flies upon thee.' "

And it came to pass as Moses had threatened. The swarm of flies came upon the Egyptians, but did not come upon the children of Israel. And the land of Egypt was corrupted by the flies.

" *The frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.*" Exod. viii. 6.
Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and said he would allow the people to worship their God by bringing sacrifices in the land of Egypt. But Moses replied : " How can we bring as sacrifices the animals worshipped by the Egyptians as gods, but which are abominations to us ? The Egyptians will rise up against us and stone us. We must go free and bring our sacrifices in the wilderness, at a distance of three days' journey from the borders of Egypt."

And Pharaoh replied : " I will let you go, but not very far." Moses answered, " Do not deal deceitfully," but trusting to Pharaoh's promise, he prayed to God, and the swarm of flies was removed.



No sooner did Pharaoh see himself free than he hardened his heart and withdrew everything he had promised. Then God sent Moses to Pharaoh, saying : " Let the people go, or a very grievous murrain will come upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, and upon the sheep ; but it shall not touch the province of Goshen—the cattle of the Israelites shall remain immune."

But Pharaoh would not heed, and he remained unmoved although he saw the cattle of the Egyptians decimated by the pest, and those of the Israelites untouched.

Then God said to Moses and Aaron : " Take a handful of ashes from the oven and cast it up towards the heavens so that it spreads like a cloud of dust over the land, and it will carry contamination far and wide, and wherever it falls, man and beast will be infected, and their bodies will be covered with boils and blains."

Moses did as God commanded, and a devastating sickness broke out, and the whole of Egypt was smitten with this infectious disease. Yet in spite of the severity of this illness, from which no one escaped, Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to listen to the word of God, sent to him through Moses and Aaron. He was still too proud to acknowledge the mighty power of God, Who allowed him to remain stubborn at heart, that he, with the whole nation, might recognize His omnipotence.

When Pharaoh had again obstinately hardened his heart and refused to allow the children of Israel to go free, a remarkable phenomenon appeared in Egypt. Egypt is a rainless country, yet suddenly thick clouds covered the heavens, and thunder and lightning shook the earth. A great hail storm broke out, the flashes of lightning lighting up the hail as it fell. It smote every man and beast that were in the field and broke all the trees. The ripened corn on its brittle stalks was all broken down, but the short, green, unripened grain was saved. Pharaoh was cowed at this tremendous outburst of thunder and lightning, the like of which had never been seen in Egypt since its foundation. For the first time he meekly said, " I have sinned ; the Lord is just, I and my people are wicked "; and he entreated Moses to pray to God for the storm to cease, for he

would let the children of Israel go, and they should stop no longer in the land. Moses went out and prayed, and the storm ceased.

No sooner was calm restored than Pharaoh changed his mind. He sent for Moses and Aaron, and asked them who were to go to worship God. And Moses replied, all without exception, for they made it clear that they intended to leave Egypt altogether, and to worship God in the desert as free men. Therefore, the old and young, women and children were to go; they would even take their cattle and their flocks and all their belongings, and leave nothing behind them. But Pharaoh pretended not to understand, and said he would only allow the men to go; the rest were to remain behind. And he drove Moses and Aaron away.

The people of Egypt, who at the beginning would not listen to the words of God through Moses and Aaron, now began to recognize that they had done wrong, and some of them, on hearing of the threatened storm, had gathered their flocks and herds that were pasturing in the fields and put them in the stables and pens, whilst those who would not listen had reason to regret it, for the hail had killed most of the cattle and sheep.

God sent Moses and Aaron again to Pharaoh to warn him of the consequences of his



"There was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous." Exod. ix. 24.

continued stubbornness and backsliding, and in the wake of the storm which had brought the hail an enormous number of locusts were carried over Egypt. They covered the face of the land, so that no one could distinguish the earth, and whatever green leaf had been left on the tree, and anything which had sprouted from the ground, was quickly devoured by these insects. Every place was filled with them; neither the palaces nor the houses of the ministers nor the servants could be protected from the inroad of the locusts; in fact, they left nothing eatable. Famine stared in the face of the inhabitants of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh sent in haste for Moses and Aaron, and he begged of them again, "Entreat the Lord only this once, for I have sinned, that God remove the danger of death by famine and starvation,

which has been brought about by the plague of the locusts."

And Moses prayed to God, and a west wind arose and lifted up the hosts of locusts and carried them away to the sea, beyond the borders of the land of Egypt. And again Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not let the people go free.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out thine hand over Egypt," and a thick darkness



"When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts."
Exod. x. 13.

fell over Egypt, so thick that it could almost be felt. It lasted for three days, and the people were unable to move from their houses ; but in the province of Goshen, where the children of Israel lived, there was light in their dwelling-places. When Pharaoh saw this pall of darkness falling upon Egypt, he again called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them that they could all go now, but they must leave their cattle behind, for he wanted to make sure of their return. But Moses replied that not only would they have to take their flocks and herds, but that they even expected Pharaoh, who had now recognized the power of God and had obeyed His command, should show his obedience by sending with them cattle which could be brought as sacrifices to God in his name. This so enraged Pharaoh, who felt himself humiliated, that he said : " Go hence, see my face no more, for on the day thou seest my face thou diest." And Moses replied : " Thou hast spoken well. I will not see thy face again any more."

At last the final blow fell. Until then Pharaoh himself had not been touched, but now he was also to feel the severity of God's judgment against his blind obstinacy and the hardening of his heart, for he had believed that he could with impunity disobey God's commands and break his own promises.

God called Moses and told him that all the first-born of Egypt were to die, both man and beast, at a given moment. It was to take place in the middle of the night, when the Angel of Death would pass through Egypt and smite and destroy the idols of Egypt, as well as the first-born, from the prince who should rule in his father's stead to the captive in the dungeon. None was to be spared. Then Pharaoh's pride would be broken, and the children of Israel would be urged to leave the country, and would even be driven out in hot haste. But they were to be prepared for the event, and were to ask of their neighbours and friends gifts of silver, gold and jewels and God would give them favour in the sight of the Egyptians, who would willingly accede to their requests.

At the same time God commanded Moses to call together the elders of the community and tell them that they were to obtain a lamb for each household, which was to be slaughtered on the

evening of the appointed night. They were to roast it and make a special meal of it. It was to be roasted in its entirety in fire, and they were to take its blood and sprinkle it on the posterns and lintels of their doors, as a token ; and the Angel of Destruction, who would come and smite the first-born of Egypt, would pass over their houses and cause no hurt to anyone. Moreover, they were to eat this meal in their houses with their loins girded, the shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands ; and with the lamb they were to eat bitter herbs and unleavened bread. But they should be ready to depart at the given signal.

The children of Israel did as Moses commanded them, and thus the Feast of Passover was established for all generations to come.

When the appointed night came, there arose a wailing in the whole of Egypt, for there was not a house in which there was no dead. In the middle of the night Pharaoh and his servants rose up, and all the nation with them, and they called on Moses and Aaron and asked them to leave the country in haste, and urged them to go at once, for they feared they also would die if the children of Israel remained longer with them.

So great was the haste with which the children of Israel were urged to leave that they had no time to bake their bread. They had to take the dough as it was, on their backs, and carry it with them, and afterwards they made of it unleavened bread, which was baked in the sun. And this was the kind of unleavened bread they were to eat during the Feast of Passover.

So greatly humbled was Pharaoh that he even asked the people to bless him as they went. All this came to pass in the night of the fifteenth day of the first month, called Nisan, when God brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt with all their hosts.

No sooner had they left the country than Pharaoh repented of having let the people go free. As the Israelites had not taken the direct route, but had been led by Moses in the neighbourhood of the two fortresses by the sea, Pharaoh said, "They have lost their way, the desert will close in upon them." Emboldened by this, he called his army together, with his chariots and riders, and started in pursuit

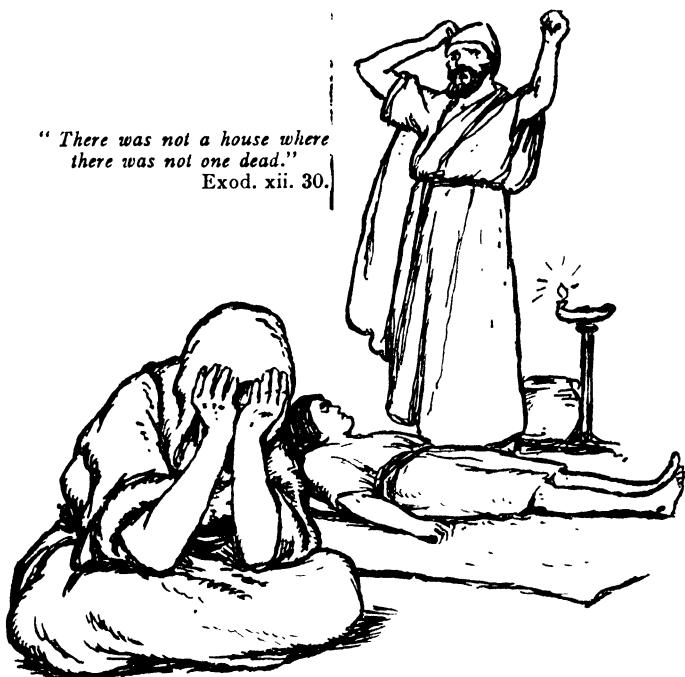
of the children of Israel. When they saw the army of Egyptians approaching, they lost heart and turned upon Moses, saying : " Are there not graves enough already prepared in Egypt, that we are led out to die here ? It will be better for us to return and serve the Egyptians rather than find our death in the wilderness." But

Moses comforted them and said : " Stand fast, fear not, for you will see the victory of God ; He is fighting for us."

And God said to Moses : " Stretch forth thine hand over the waters, and they will divide, and the people will pass through them as over dry land."

And a mighty wind blew up from the east, and the waters of the sea were driven in high waves which stood up like walls. The ground was left bare, and over it passed dry shod the whole host of the children of Israel, with a pillar of fire before them and a pillar of cloud behind. Blinded by fury and confounded by the pillar of cloud which separated them from their prey, and also in the hope of bringing them back to slavery, the Egyptian army plunged into the sea after the Israelites. Moses stretched out his arm, and the wind stopped, the towering waters dropped and covered the host of the Egyptians in their mighty waves. Not one escaped.

"There was not a house where there was not one dead."
Exod. xii. 30.



Then Moses and the children of Israel sang their great song, the first hymn of a freed people.

They then started on their journey through the wilderness, which they accomplished in stages until they reached Mount Sinai. There they worshipped God, as He had foretold to Moses when He first spoke to him on that very spot from the Burning Bush. There also God gave the Ten Commandments, and the laws and prescriptions as given in Holy Writ.

“The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”
—Ps. ciii. 6.

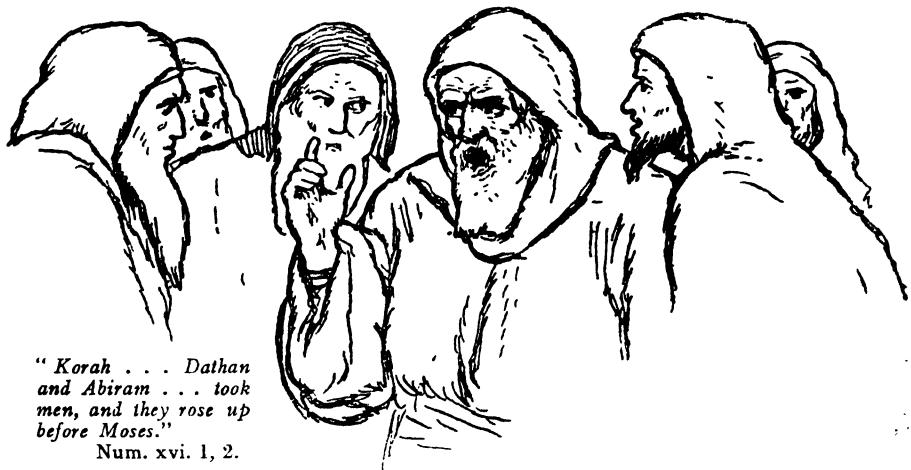
THE TEN SPIES AND KORAH

“The glory of the Lord appeared.”—Num. xvi. 42.

After the Law had been given to the children of Israel, they travelled through the desert for some length of time until they reached the borders of the Promised Land. Then Moses, at the request of the people, sent men to spy out the land and to bring back a report as to whether it was a rich land or a poor land, a fruitful land or a barren land, the character of the nations living therein, and whether they lived in fortified places or in open places. One man was selected from each tribe, the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob, and thus twelve in all went through the length and breadth of the Land of Canaan. They found the land to be so fruitful that a cutting from a vine with clusters of grapes on it was so heavy that it needed two men to carry it. Yet in spite of all this, they saw that a warlike people inhabited the land, and they lost heart, for they forgot that it was not through their own might that they would secure the land that God had promised to their forefathers, but by the help of God. So they gave out an evil report, and the children of Israel were greatly disheartened. But two of the spies—Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh—rose up and tried to calm the people, protesting their faith in God, and their strong belief



THE EGYPTIANS PERISH IN THE RED SEA



that with His help they would easily be able to conquer the land. But the people would not trust them—they believed rather the other tale; and the wrath of God was kindled, and He said to Moses: "How long shall this people continually provoke Me? Now, because they did not believe, they shall not be allowed to enter the land. Forty years they will have to wander in the desert, corresponding to the forty days it has taken the spies to go through the land, until every one of them capable of bearing arms has died; but their children shall enter the Promised Land. And because Joshua and Caleb were faithful unto Me, they shall be spared to go into the land."

In vain did the children of Israel repent; it was too late, and this only increased their discontent.

Among the people was a man named Korah. He was of the same branch of the house of Levi, and he believed that he might have been chosen as chief of the priesthood instead of Aaron, the brother of Moses. He believed he had the same claim, and was more capable. He therefore took advantage of the discontent and disaffection among the people, and plotted together with other elders, some two hundred and fifty men, among them Dathan and Abiram, the princes of the tribe of Reuben.

They also, like Korah, thought that, being the heads of the tribe

of Reuben, the first-born son of Jacob, the leadership belonged to them rather than to Moses and Aaron. They therefore joined Korah in his revolt against Moses and Aaron ; and Korah came to the assembly and said that Moses and Aaron presumed too much, and that there were other holy men also in the congregation. They pretended to forget that Moses had not assumed the leadership by his own will, but by the command of God. Moses said : “ Bide till to-morrow morning, when God will show whom He has chosen, and who there is holy among you worthy to serve Him. Come here with your censers and bring an incense offering to God ; and as for you, is it not enough that God has chosen you from among all the tribes to be close to the sanctuary and to minister unto Him ? Why do you want the priesthood also ? ” Moses then sent to Dathan and Abiram and asked them to come, but they refused and mocked at him, and said that he had brought them out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey, but had not yet brought them to the land which he said was flowing with milk and honey. Nor had he brought them to a land of farms and vineyards. Did he believe he could blind their eyes ?

Moses prayed to God and said : “ I have not wronged these men nor oppressed them. I have not taken away even an ass from them. Do then also, God, not accept their offerings.”

On the morrow Korah and his associates came with the censers filled with incense, and stood at the gate of the sanctuary, and Moses and Aaron did likewise. And there appeared suddenly the glory of God. And God said to Moses and Aaron : “ Separate yourselves from this congregation, as I wish to destroy it in My anger.” And Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and prayed, and said : “ Should the whole congregation be destroyed for the wickedness of one man ? ” And God again hearkened to their prayer. Then Moses turned to the people and said to them, pointing to Dathan and Abiram, who were standing at the gates of their tents together with their wives and children : “ If these men die a natural death, then the Lord has not sent me ; but if they go down alive into the pit, then you will thereby know that whatever I have done I have not

done by myself, but the Lord has sent me. Remove yourselves from the neighbourhood of these wicked people, and do not touch anything belonging to them, lest you share their fate." All of a sudden the earth split open, and Korah and Dathan and Abiram and all their belongings, with all their wealth, rushed down into the open pit, and the earth swallowed them up and closed upon them. When the people who stood around saw what had happened and heard their shrieking, they ran away from them. A fire also came out from the holy place and burned the two hundred and fifty men who wantonly presumed to bring incense to God, and they all perished. Yet through the love of God the children of Korah were spared, for they had evidently not taken part in the rebellion.

Yet in spite of all these signs the people were still dissatisfied. The friends of Korah and his associates were accusing Moses of causing death in the community. And there arose great strife among them. Aaron took his censer and went into their midst, and showed thereby that the fire of the Lord had not touched



"Behold, the rod of Aaron . . . brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms."
Num. xvii. 8.

him, and that he was the chosen one to be the priest of God and to bring incense before God. He thus appeased the anger of the people and made peace among them by his token of God's choice. Still, in order to allay their murmurings and doubts, God told Moses to order the elders of the people to put each one of them, according to the number of tribes, a rod into the Tabernacle. They were to record the names of tribes on the twelve rods, and Aaron was also to put his rod there with the name of the tribe of Levi inscribed upon it, and the staff of the man whom God had chosen would blossom in the morning. And thus the murmurings of the people would be stopped finally. And it came to pass that when they entered the Tabernacle in the morning they found that the rod of Aaron had even blossomed and ripened into almonds, so he brought the rod out and showed it to the people. And henceforth peace reigned among them, and the priesthood of Aaron remained undisputed.

"A wicked man stirreth up strife."—PROV. xv. 18 (Author's Version).

THE WATERS OF STRIFE AND THE DEATH OF MOSES

"Behold the land of Canaan which I have given to the children of Israel for a possession."—DEUT. XXXII. 49 (Author's Version).

Forty years had elapsed since the Israelites had left Egypt. A new generation had grown up, hardened by the wandering in the desert. They were prepared to enter the Land of Promise. Yet the old spirit of dissatisfaction and murmuring had not died out ; it broke out at the slightest provocation. When they found themselves at one time in the desert close to the borders of the land of Edom, water suddenly failed them. So they came up to Moses and Aaron again with the same complaint as their fathers before them. Moses, who had stood the fatigue of the forty years' wandering, grew angry. His patience was put to a great strain, and again he



"THE WATER CAME OUT ABUNDANTLY, AND THE CONGREGATION DRANK." Num. xx. 11.

prayed to God, who told him to go and speak to the rock, and water would come out from it sufficient to quench the thirst of the people. But Moses could no longer restrain himself, and instead of speaking meekly to the people as in former times, he rebuked them harshly and called them rebels. And in his anger, instead of speaking to the rock, as ordered by God, he struck it twice with the rod in his hand. And the waters rushed out of the rock, and the people slaked their thirst. But God was angry with Moses for the way in which he carried out His command, and for having lost his temper with the people. He had not sanctified God in the eyes of the people, neither had he increased their faith and confidence in the Divine guidance. The place where the people strove with Moses was henceforth known as the Waters of Strife.

Moses and Aaron were therefore no longer the calm and circumspect leaders who would bring the people successfully into the Promised Land. From afar Moses would see it, but he would not pass over the borders of the land.

Moses had thus forfeited the great reward for his labour, yet he submitted unquestioningly to God's decree. Soon afterwards he asked God to appoint a successor who would go out and come in before the people, and the choice fell upon Joshua, the faithful assistant of Moses, a man who had proved trustworthy in all circumstances. Already on a former occasion he had shown his valour when fighting the Amalekites, who had suddenly attacked Israel, and afterwards he had endeavoured to raise the drooping spirits of the people when they were told that the conquest of Canaan was impossible.

Moses placed his hands upon the head of Joshua, and consecrated him to the great task of being later on, his successor in the leadership of the people. And God told Moses that the time had now come for him to depart this world, and that he should publicly appoint Joshua to lead the people across the waters of Jordan to the land which had been promised to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses did accordingly, and called all the people together, and there he reminded them of all the wonders and signs

which God had shown to them and to their fathers since the day when He had brought them out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage, and how wonderfully they had been fed, with Manna from Heaven, and clad during the forty years of the wanderings in the wilderness. Let them remember all the loving kindness and forbearance of God

when they had sinned, and let them obey the commandments, by which alone they would live in peace and ease in the land to which they were going. For only thus would their life be prolonged, and they would enjoy the blessings of God. He warned them at the same time that if they would forsake God's laws and commandments and follow the examples of the nations who were near them and around them, then they would soon lose the land which God had given to them, and would be scattered among the nations and be persecuted whithersoever they went. And the land would remain desolate. But even then God would not entirely forsake them; for if they repented of their evil deeds and turned again to God in faith and hope, God would turn to them and love them and bring them back into the land of their forefathers.



"I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." Deut. xxxiv. 4.

Then Moses sang the glorious hymn in which he took Heaven and Earth to witness to the faithfulness and love of God for His people. And though many troubles would come upon them, He yet would not suffer them to be entirely lost. He then gave his blessing to each tribe separately. Before parting, Moses had also written down the whole of the Law. He gave it to the priests to keep in the Tabernacle of Testimony, and he commanded that once every seventh year this book of the Law was to be read to the people who assembled at the holy place on the occasion of the festival of Tabernacles.

And God said unto Moses : “ Go up to the Mount of Nebo by the ford of Moab, and behold the land which I am giving to the children of Israel, for there shalt thou die and be gathered to thy people, as Aaron has been gathered on the Hill of Hills. Thou shalt only see the country from afar, but thou shalt not enter it, because thou hast not sanctified Me in the eyes of the people at the Waters of Strife.” Moses went up the Hill of Nebo from the fords of Moab, and there he died according to the word of God. And he was buried in a valley of that country near Bethpeor, and no one knows his grave to this very day. And Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died ; his eyes were not dim, and his strength had not weakened. And the children of Israel mourned for Moses thirty days. There never since arose another prophet in Israel like unto Moses whom God honoured face to face, by the signs and wonders which He sent him to perform in Egypt with so strong a hand and with great awe, inspiring deeds which Moses achieved in the sight of the children of Israel.

“ The memory of the just is blessed.”—PROV. x. 7.

THE FALL OF JERICHO

“ I know that the Lord hath given you the land.”—JOSHUA II. 9.

Moses had appointed Joshua leader over the people who were going into the Promised Land. A heavy task lay before him. He was to

conquer the land and divide it among the tribes of Israel. And God said to him : " My servant Moses has died. Be bold and be strong ; fear not, for I shall be with thee. And wherever thy foot will tread I will give the land unto thee, from the desert to the Lebanon, and from the great River Euphrates to the great Sea. I will be with thee and will not forsake thee. But keep and practise all the laws which I commanded My servant Moses. Be careful and prudent, so that thou mayest prosper in all thy ways."

Then Joshua commanded the people to get ready, for in three days they were to cross the Jordan and enter the land which God had promised to their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then Joshua sent two messengers secretly to examine the state of the town —Jericho—which they were facing. The two men went, and came to a woman called Rahab, an innkeeper, where they lodged. News was brought to the king of Jericho that strangers had come from among the children of Israel, and he sent men to Rahab asking her for these strangers. But she had taken them and hidden them on the roof of the house under some heaps of flax which had been gathered there, and told the king's men that indeed strangers had been, but that she did not know anything more about them, as they had left before the gates of the town had been closed when night was coming on.

Then she went up to the two men and said to them : " I know that you will conquer this country, because a terror has fallen upon all its inhabitants, and their courage is melting away before you. We have heard what God did for you when He brought you out of Egypt, and how you smote the great kings of the Amorites. Now pledge yourselves to me by an oath that you will spare me and my family when you capture this town." They promised to protect her and those of her family who would be gathered in the house with her when they entered Jericho. And they told her to tie a scarlet line on to the window through which they were going to be let down, for her house was on the wall of the city, and the window looked out from the wall. The king's men searched the surrounding country as far as the ford of the Jordan, for Rahab had told them

"She . . . hid them with the stalks of flax." Joshua ii. 6.



that the spies had taken that direction ; while to the messengers she said that they had better hide themselves for three days in the mountains, until the king's pursuers had returned to the town. Thus they did, and they came safely back from this errand to Joshua, bringing him the full report of these events.

The third day had arrived. The people were ready to march, when God told Joshua to send the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant on in front to lead the people, and to step boldly upon the waters of the Jordan. They were to walk on to the middle of the river, when the waters coming from above would cease flowing, and those below would quickly run off. Then the people were to pass through the Jordan over the bed of the river. After they had passed, the priests were to follow on to the dry ground. The people were then to take twelve stones from the bed of the river, to represent the twelve tribes, and of these a cairn was to be made on the other side of the river as a memorial for the generations to come. It would tell them that in the same manner as their forefathers had passed dry-shod through the Red Sea, so also did these men pass dry-shod through the waters of the Jordan under Joshua.

They did according to God's command, and as soon as the feet of the priests touched the waters of the Jordan the waters coming



"THE ARK OF THE LORD COMPASSED THE CITY." Joshua vi. 11.

down from them stopped flowing, and those below quickly ran off. The people passed with dry feet over the bed of the Jordan, and then they took the twelve stones which they had been commanded to take from the place where the priests had been standing, whilst these moved on to the dry land on the other side of the river. Then the waters flowed down abundantly, and the river overflowed its banks.

The people encamped at a place called Gilgal. It was just then the time of the Passover, and they celebrated it according to the prescription of the Law. The Manna had ceased to fall, and from the second day of the Passover they began to eat of the corn of the land. And the cloud which had hitherto been going before them was lifted up and vanished from their sight. They came then close to Jericho.

Jericho was a great town, and fortified by a strong wall which went round the city. When the inhabitants saw the army of the Israelites approaching, a mighty terror fell upon them, and they closed the gates of the town and shut them up fast. No one was allowed to go out or to come in. They relied on the strong walls to save them from the attack of the Israelites. When the Israelites saw these mighty fortifications they also lost courage. This was their first battle, and they did not know how they would be able to break down the walls and capture the city. But God had already performed one miracle for them in getting them past the River Jordan unharmed. He said, therefore, to Joshua : " Let the people surround the town, and the priests carry the Ark of the Covenant." And armed bands should precede and follow them. The priests should blow the trumpets whilst marching along, but the people were to keep silent. This they were to do for six days, but on the seventh day they were to make seven circuits of the town, and blow their trumpets, and when the trumpets were blown the people were to shout, and the walls would then fall down. Then they would be able to enter the town and conquer it.

Joshua then called the priests and ordered them to do as God had commanded. He told the people to be silent for six days, but on the seventh day they were to break into a mighty shout. The

priests and people did as Joshua had commanded them. Each day they made a circuit round the town, carrying the Ark of the Covenant and blowing trumpets ; but on the seventh day they went round the town seven times, and when they blew the trumpets the people shouted. Then the earth trembled, the walls shook and fell down, and wherever a man happened to stand he was able to walk straight into the town. They conquered it and absolutely destroyed it.

But the people remembered the kindness shown to the messengers of Joshua by Rahab, and the pledge which had been given to her to save her and her family, and they faithfully kept their promise.

This extraordinary victory, which was visibly by the help of God, greatly encouraged the people, whilst it frightened the other inhabitants of the land. God would help the Israelites until they had conquered the whole country.

“ For they gat not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them.”—PS. XLIV. 3 (Author’s Version).

RUTH

“ For thy God be my God.”—RUTH I. 16 (Author’s Version).

In the time when the judges ruled in Israel there came a great famine in the land. There was a rich man named Elimelech, who lived in Bethlehem-of-Judah. He took his wife Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and went to stay in the plains of Moab. There Elimelech died. His two sons took Moabitish women to wife. And so they lived for ten years, when the two men died. Then Naomi, who had heard that God had remembered His people and had given them bread again, decided to return to her own country. She said to her two daughters-in-law : “ Return now to your own father’s house, and for all the love which you have shown the dead and the living may the Lord recompense you, and may each of you find rest in the house of her husband.” Then Orpah, one of the

daughters-in-law, kissed her and went back to her father's house, but Ruth, the other daughter-in-law, clung to her. Naomi tried to persuade her to follow Orpah's example, but she steadfastly refused, and said : " Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." When Naomi saw how determined Ruth was, she ceased from pressing her, and they journeyed on together until they reached Bethlehem, where the whole town was greatly stirred by the sad news of Naomi.

It was then the time of the barley harvest, and Naomi told Ruth to go to one of the neighbouring fields and glean some ears, as it was the custom for poor people to do. Ruth happened to light on a part of the field belonging to a certain Boaz, a rich man of Bethlehem. Whilst the reapers were engaged in their work and Ruth was gleaning after them, together with other maidens, Boaz came out of the town and passed the field. There he met the reapers with the beautiful greeting, " The Lord be with you," and they replied, " The Lord bless thee." He then noticed Ruth, and he asked the overseer of the reapers who that girl was, and to whom she belonged. The man replied : " This is the Moabitish woman who has come with Naomi, and from early morning she has been continually gleaning the ears, without any interruption save for the short time she went into the house to rest." Then Boaz said to her : " I have heard of your repute, and of the kindness which you have shown to the dead and the living, and of your love for Naomi your mother-in-law, and that you have come to place yourself under the shadow of God's wings. Remain here and glean after the reapers. I have given strict orders that no one shall touch you. Take your meals with the girls that are working here, and drink water from the pitchers which the servants have filled. Do not go anywhere else in search of anything that you may want."

They then sat down and took their meal together. She ate and



RUTH AND NAOMI



"SHE WENT, AND CAME, AND GLEANED IN THE FIELD AFTER THE REAPERS." Ruth ii. 3.

was satisfied, and she still had some food left over. Boaz told the reapers also to pull out ears from the sheaves and drop them on the fields for Ruth to collect. She gathered on that day so much that when she beat them out in the evening she was able to bring a measureful home to Naomi. She also carried home that portion of the meal which she had left over. When Naomi saw what she had brought home, she asked her where she had been. Ruth told her all that happened, and what Boaz had said to her. And Naomi blessed God for His mercy and loving-kindness that had never forsaken them, neither the living nor the dead. Then she said to Ruth : "This man is a near relative of ours, and he will be able to redeem the property which belonged to Elimelech and to your late husband."

Meanwhile the harvest of the barley and the harvest of the corn were proceeding. When it came to an end, Naomi said : "It is time now that you go to Boaz and ask him for his help, for no doubt he will see the matter through to the end. Go quietly in the depth of the night to the place where Boaz is winnowing the corn, and there appeal to him to redeem our property." Ruth did as she

was told, and Boaz, deeply moved by her entreaties, promised to do what he could to redeem the field from the pledge. But he said there was another nearer kinsman who had the first duty to redeem the property. Should this man,



"Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned." Ruth. ii. 18.

refuse to do so, then he would be the next-of-kin, and he would be willing to redeem it. Accordingly, the very next morning he went to the gates of the town, where the court was held. And it so happened that the other kinsman passed him by. Boaz stopped him and asked him to buy the field of Naomi and of Ruth and restore it. The man was willing to do this ; but Boaz reminded him that if he bought the field he would also be bound to marry Ruth, so as to perpetuate the name of the dead owner of the field. The other man then declined, as he was afraid it would encroach upon his other property. It was then the custom in Israel with such transactions that a man who refused to take upon himself any such obligation by purchase or otherwise should slip off the shoe from his foot, and cast it on the ground. He freed himself, as it were, by this token of his obligations, and left them to be taken over by anyone willing to do so. And this that man did in the presence of ten elders. Boaz then redeemed the field, and took Ruth to wife. She bare him a son, whom the neighbours brought to Naomi, saying : “ Blessed be God who by this child has been unto you a restorer of life and a support in your old age.” And they called the name of the child Obed. He was the ancestor of King David.

“ Trust in Him at all times, ye people ; pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us.”—Ps. LXII. 8.

THE STORY OF GIDEON

“ Go with thy strength and save Israel.”—JUDGES VI. 14 (Author’s Version).

The Israelites, after living for some time in peace and freedom, took to wrong ways and did what was evil in the sight of God. He now gave them into the hands of the Midianites, Amalekites, and other nations that lived in the east and in the desert. They used to come up in the time of the harvest, gather in all the corn, and destroy what they could not take ; and they carried away all the oxen and sheep and everything that the Israelites possessed. They swarmed

over the land like locusts, and their camels were as numerous as the sands on the shore of the sea. They reduced the Israelites to such starvation and misery that they used to hide from their enemies in the caverns of the mountains and in holes under the ground. Out of the depth of their misery, the Israelites remembered God, and they cried unto Him for help. At that time there lived a valiant man, by name Gideon, the son of Joash, of the tribe of Manasseh. He was threshing wheat in a wine cellar, lest the Midianites should see and rob him of it, when the angel of the Lord came to him and said : " Go with thy strength and courage and save Israel." But he hesitated, for how could he hope to save Israel when his clan was the weakest in Manasseh, and he the youngest of his family. But God at once reassured him, and said that He would be with him, and he was sure to smite the Midianites as one man.

Meanwhile the Midianites and their allies had come up in large numbers. Gideon then called upon tribes of Israel to send men to fight the Midianites. Some of the tribes responded ; others refused, being afraid. Altogether there came to Gideon about thirty-two thousand men. In that night Gideon prayed to God to give him a sign that He would be with him and help him to win the battle. He asked that a fleece of wool which was lying there on the threshing floor should become wet with the dew, while the floor around it should remain dry. And this came to pass, for in the morning he was able to squeeze out a bucketful of water from the fleece, whilst the floor all around it remained dry. Gideon was not yet satisfied, and he prayed that God would forgive him if he asked now that the dew should be sent only on the floor and not on the fleece. And the next morning the fleece was dry, whilst the floor all around it was wet with the dew. And God said to Gideon : " The number of the people that have gathered together is too great. They might believe after the victory that they had won of their own might, and forget that it was I Who helped them. Make a proclamation, and tell those who are afraid or timid to return to their homes." And no less than twenty-two thousand left Gideon and returned to their



homes. And still God said that even the ten thousand were too many. Let them go together to the brook and be told to drink out of it. For this would be the test: those who would be inured to hardships and would lap the water with their tongues direct from the brook would be the hardy men with whom Gideon would win the battle, while those more effeminate who would kneel gently and draw the water up with their hands should be dismissed. Gideon did as he was told, and only three hundred lay down on the ground and lapped the water as a dog laps, and these alone remained with Gideon; the rest he sent back. Then God said to him: "Go down in the night close to the guard and hear what the Midianites are talking, and there a sign will be shown to you that the Midianites will be given into your hands." In the night Gideon took Phurah, his lieutenant, and went stealthily to the place where the guards were stationed. There he heard two men speaking to one another. One said: "I dreamed a dream: a round cake fell into the camp, and it rolled on and struck the chief tent and overturned it. Then it rolled on and struck another tent." And his fellow replied: "This

is no other than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash. God will give Midian and all his camp into his power."

When Gideon heard these words, he felt greatly encouraged, and returned to his followers and said to them : " Let each of you take a trumpet and a burning torch inside a pitcher and follow me. Watch what I do and do likewise." He divided his troop into three portions, and surrounded the camp on three sides. Then he blew the trumpet, and they did likewise. They broke the pitchers, and, lifting up the flaring torches, they shouted at the same time, " The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and rushed upon the camp of the Midianites. These were seized by a great terror. They fought one another in their bewilderment, and fled panic-stricken.

Gideon, with his men and others who had joined him in the march, pursued them over the River Jordan and far into the desert. He captured their king, who had acted cruelly to Gideon's family, and who had murdered his brothers. He slew the Midianites, and broke their power to such an extent that henceforth they were no longer able to attack the Israelites, for they were completely crushed.

" Through Thee will we defeat our enemies ; through Thy Name will we overthrow them that rise up against us."—PS. XLIV. 5 (Author's Version).

SAMSON AND DELILAH

" O Lord God, remember me."—JUDGES XVI. 28.

The Philistines, who inhabited the southern part of the land, had grown very mighty. The children of Israel had again forsaken the God of their fathers, and had gone after the worship of the gods of other nations, and so they fell into the hands of the Philistines, who oppressed them very severely for forty years.

At that time there lived a man named Manoah, and he had no children. One day an angel of the Lord appeared and said to Manoah's wife : " A child will be born unto thee, and he will be a Nazarite devoted unto God all his life. He will be a very powerful



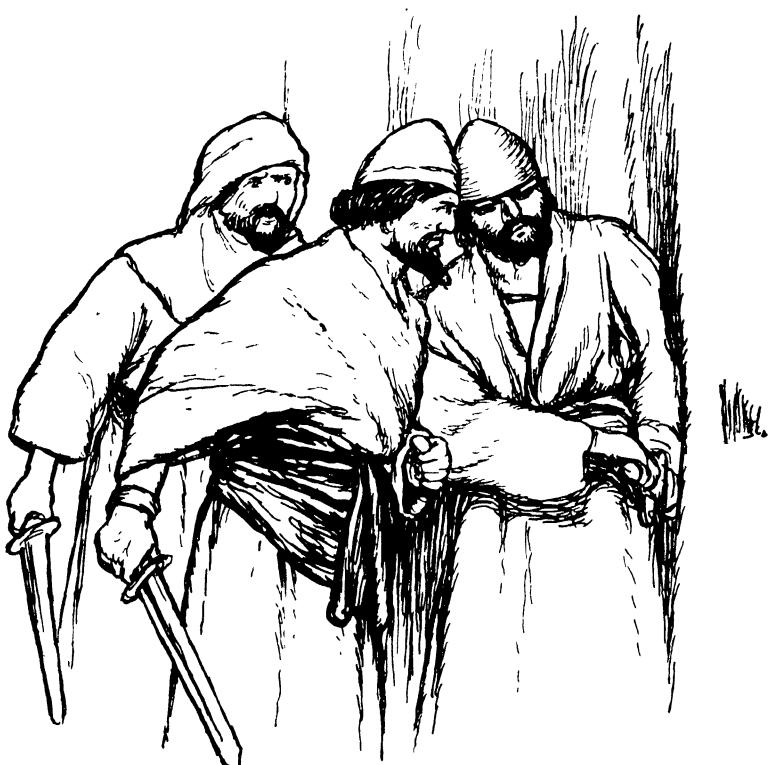
SAMSON SLAYS THE LION

man, and will save Israel from the hands of the Philistines." And it came to pass as the angel had foretold: a son was born, and he was called Samson.

Samson lived near the border of the land of the Philistines, and he often went across it to fight them. There he fell in love with a maiden, and from time to time he went to see her. One day he was walking along the road when he saw a lion come out of a vineyard towards him. There came upon him a mighty strength, and he tore the animal in pieces as a man tears a kid; but he told no one what had happened, neither his father, nor his mother, nor his betrothed. Some time afterwards he came along that road again, and saw that a swarm of bees had settled inside the skeleton of the lion and had made their hive there. So he took some of the honeycomb, and,

eating of it,
gave some to
his father and
some to his
mother; but
he did not tell
them that he
had taken the
honeycomb
from the skele-
ton of the lion.

Then Sam-
son gave a
great wedding
feast, and he
said to his
Philistine com-
panions: "Let
us try and
guess riddles.
If you guess



"There were men lying in wait." Judges xvi. 9.

mine, I will give you thirty suits of clothes, but if you do not guess it, you will have to give me thirty suits." They agreed, and this was the riddle which Samson put to them : " Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

Not knowing that it referred to the lion which he had killed and to the honey which he had taken from the skeleton, they could not guess the riddle, so they threatened his wife that they would burn the house and all in it unless she got from Samson the solution of the riddle. She was frightened at the threat, and after many caresses Samson told her the meaning. She told the Philistines, and they claimed the reward, saying they had guessed the riddle. Samson knew what had happened, and said to them : " Had you not ploughed the ground with my heifer, you would never have guessed the riddle."

And in anger he went back to his father's house. While Samson was away his wife was given to a companion, so when he came back he took vengeance on them. He caught a large number of foxes, tied burning torches to their tails, and then let them loose in the fields of the Philistines when the corn was ripe, causing them thereby much damage.

The Philistines, in their turn, tried to capture Samson, and at last succeeded in surrounding him in a certain place ; but he caught hold of a jaw bone of an ass and smote and slew one thousand men. Then he exclaimed : " With the jaw bone of an ass I have made heaps upon heaps, with the jaw bone of an ass I have smitten a thousand men."

But he felt exhausted, and he cried to God not to let him die of thirst after so signal a victory over the Philistines ; and from a cleft in the hill, which he had called the " Jaw Bone," a well sprang up, and he was refreshed.

A long time afterwards he fell in love with a woman called Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. When the lords of the Philistines heard of it, they came to her and offered her a huge bribe to find out the secret of Samson's strength. So she asked him one day wherein his strength lay, and how it could be overcome. He

said that if he were bound with seven wet thongs that had never been dried, he would become as weak as any ordinary man. She told it to the Philistines, who sent a guard to watch secretly in her house. Then she tied him with the wet thongs and shouted, "The Philistines are upon thee!" Samson rose up and broke the thongs as though they were fibres singed by the fire. So she said to him : " You have been mocking at me and telling me lies. Tell me now wherein lies your strength." And he said if he were bound with seven new ropes which had never been used, his strength would go. She did so, but he snapped them like thin threads. Again she said, " You have mocked and laughed at me ; tell me the truth." And he said if the seven plaits of his hair were woven into the webbing of a loom, he would lose his strength. She did this and fastened them with a pin, but he arose and pulled off the pin with the webbing. When she saw that he would not tell her the truth, she worried him so long that at last, in a moment of weakness, he gave his secret away. He told her that he had been dedicated to God from his birth as a Nazarite. The hair of his head must never be cut. The moment his head was shaved, his strength would go. Delilah knew that this time he had told her the whole truth, so she sent to the lords of the Philistines, telling them that she had now discovered the secret of Samson's strength. They came up and brought the money that they had promised, and lay in wait in the . Samson



She called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head." Judges xvi. 19.

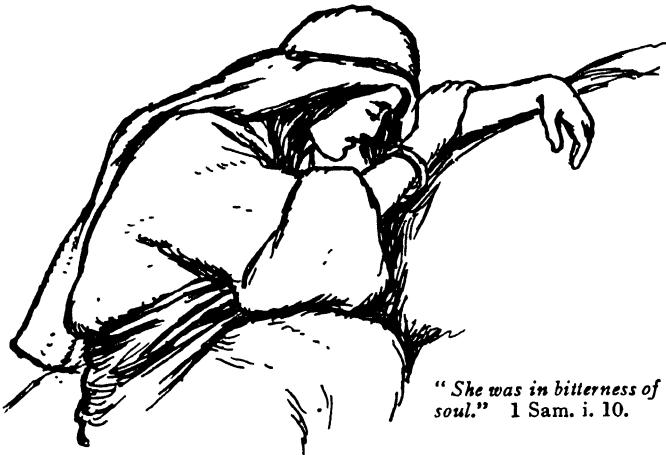


"HE WIST NOT THAT THE LORD WAS DEPARTED FROM HIM." Judges xvi. 20.

had fallen asleep with his head on her lap, so she sent for men to shave his head whilst he was lying there asleep. Then she exclaimed, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" and he said, "I will go out and refresh myself." But he did not know that he had forfeited the favour of God, and that His spirit was no longer with him. He was now as weak as any other man.

The Philistines took hold of him and put his eyes out, and cast him into the prison in Gaza to grind the mill there with the slaves. They then arranged a feast of thanksgiving to their gods, who, as they believed, had delivered Samson into their hands—Samson, who had caused so much destruction and had wasted their lands. They gathered themselves together in a large building that rested on pillars. There were many thousands present in the house and on the roof, and whilst they brought sacrifices to their gods and made merry, they said: "Let them bring Samson to make sport for us." So they brought Samson from the prison. Meanwhile the hair on his head had begun to grow, and some of the old strength had come back. He was led into their midst by a warder, and Samson said to him: "Lead me to the pillars upon which the house rests, that I may lean against them." The warder led him thither, and he put his right hand on one pillar and his left hand on the other, and he prayed to God to remember him so that he might now be avenged for his two eyes, which the Philistines had so cruelly put out. Then, grasping the two pillars, he exclaimed, "May my life perish with the Philistines!" and bending forward with his full strength, he snapped the pillars, and the house fell upon all the lords and upon all the people who were in it. And Samson killed by his death more than he had killed in his life time. His family came afterwards and took the body and buried it in the burial-place of his father Manoah. After that great anarchy prevailed, which lasted for some time and nearly caused the extinction of the tribe of Benjamin.

"Let the mighty man glory in his might."—JER. ix. 23.



"She was in bitterness of soul." 1 Sam. i. 10.

ELI AND SAMUEL

"Go in peace, and the God of Israel may grant thy petition."—1 SAM. i. 17
(Author's Version).

One of the last judges in Israel was the High Priest Eli. The Tabernacle of the Lord was then in Shiloh, and hither the people used to come in pilgrimage three times a year to celebrate the great festivals and to rejoice before the Lord. At that time there lived a man of the tribe of Levi named Elkanah. He had two wives, one called Peninnah, and the other Hannah. And from his house in Ramathaim-Zophim he came with his whole family to spend a festival before the Lord. He brought with him his two wives and the children of Peninnah, for Hannah had no children ; and whenever he divided the portions he gave to each one a portion, and to Hannah he gave a double one, for he loved her dearly, and he tried to comfort her for being childless. But she grieved over it, and nothing comforted her. So one day, after the meal, she went to the Tabernacle and stood there before God, praying out of the anguish of her heart, and weeping bitterly. She prayed only with her heart ; her lips moved softly, but no sound came from them. Eli was sitting by watching her, and not hearing her pray, thought she was a drunken woman who moved her lips without being able to utter a word.

So he rebuked her and said : " Why art thou drunk ? Free thyself from the wine." But Hannah humbly replied : " I am not drunk, nor have I tasted wine, but my heart is heavy, and I have poured out my soul before God. I have only uttered my grief and my sorrow, therefore do not ill-judge me. I prayed to God that He should remember me and grant me a male child, and I vowed to dedicate him to the service of God all his life. He shall be a Nazarite, and a razor shall not pass over his head." Then Eli replied : " May the God of Israel grant you your request." And the woman went away happy.

Her prayer was heard, and after a year she gave birth to a male child, whom she called Samuel, for she said, " I have asked him from the Ever Living, and He has hearkened to my prayer." While he was still quite young she brought the child to Shiloh and presented him to Eli, saying : " This is the child for whom I prayed, and God has granted my request. Now let him serve God here all his life." They dressed Samuel with the priestly robe, and every year when his mother came she brought him an embroidered coat.

And Samuel grew up in the fear of God under the guardianship of Eli. Eli was already then an old man. He had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. These did not walk in the ways of the Lord. They disobeyed His commandments, and by their misbehaviour they greatly offended the people who used to come and bring sacrifices to the Lord.

Eli did not restrain them. He was too fond of them to rebuke them severely, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against him and his house, and He warned Eli of the doom that would fall upon his house ; yet Eli did nothing to prevent his children going from bad to worse. They persisted in their evil deeds. Samuel was growing up, but he remained good in the eyes of God and men.

One night, when Eli was lying down resting in his own place, Samuel was lying down in the Tabernacle, and the lamp of God became dim. Then God called Samuel, and he ran to Eli and said : " I am here, for you called me." Eli answered : " I did not call. Return to your bed." And again God called Samuel, and he again

ran to Eli, saying : "Here I am, for you did call me." And Eli replied : "I did not call you ; go back to bed." And a third time God called Samuel, and then Eli understood that it was God Who called, and he said to Samuel, who had again come to him : "Go, lie down ; if you are called, then say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'" And when God called again, Samuel replied as Eli had told him : "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And God said to him that the time had now come when He would punish the house of Eli, as He had threatened before, for in spite of it Eli had not restrained his children from their outrageous behaviour, and no sacrifice or gifts which they might bring could atone for, or wipe out, the sins which they had committed. In the morning Eli asked Samuel what God had said. Samuel was reluctant to tell him the terrible message, but Eli insisted. When he heard it, he resigned himself and said : "It is the decree of the Ever Living ; let Him do what is good in His sight."

By that time the Philistines held the people of Israel in subjection. They had occupied the country, and now they gathered their forces to attack afresh. And Israel was routed in the battle. Then they said : "Let us bring the Ark of God in our midst, for then God will help us to defeat our enemies." So they sent to Shiloh and brought the Ark of the Testimony into the camp, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, accompanied the Ark into the camp. When it reached the camp, the people felt encouraged and raised a loud shout and war-cry. When the Philistines heard the shouting, they asked for the cause of it, and were told that the Ark of the God of Israel had been brought into the camp, and that God would be fighting their battle. And the Philistines got frightened, and said : "Woe unto us ! Who can fight the mighty God of Israel, Who destroyed the power of Egypt ? Let us be brave and fight, lest they enslave us as we enslaved them." And because the people had placed their trust in the Ark instead of in God Himself, He delivered them into the hands of their enemies. The Philistines defeated them, captured the Ark, and made a great slaughter. No less than thirty thousand were killed on that day, and among them



AS LONG AS HE LIVETH HE SHALL BE LENT TO THE LORD." 1 Sam. i. 28.

both the sons of Eli. One of the men ran away from the camp and came to Shiloh. He brought the report of the defeat to Eli, who was sitting on the high-road waiting for news, for his heart was troubled about the Ark, which had been taken away from the Tabernacle. When he heard that his two sons were killed, and that the Philistines had captured the Ark and carried it away, he fell off the seat backwards, broke his neck, and died. And thus the wickedness of the sons brought upon the house of Eli that punishment which God had foretold would come upon them, and to which they had not listened. And Samuel then became High Priest in the place of Eli.

The Philistines, with great jubilation, carried into their cities the Ark of God which they had captured from the beaten Israelites. But their joy was short-lived. Into whichever city they brought the Ark, terrible disease broke out among the people, so they moved it from place to place, not knowing what to do with it. They had first taken it to the temple of one of their chief gods, Dagon. In the morning they had found the statue lying face downwards before the Ark, broken in pieces, while its head and hands were lying outside the temple. Besides being smitten with disease, they were also overrun with mice.

At last they asked their wise men what they could do to cure the pestilence. So their wise men told them to make images of gold of the mice and of the boils from which they were suffering. They were then to take two heifers which were suckling calves and which had never drawn the plough. The calves were to be shut up in their stalls, and the heifers were to be yoked to a new cart, the Ark of God was to be placed on it and the golden offerings to be put beside it, and then the heifers were to be allowed to go their own way. If they took the road to the land of Israel, then the people would know that it was the retention of the Ark which had caused all the trouble to come upon them.

The Philistines did as they were advised, and, to their great astonishment, the heifers at once took the straight road which led from their land to the land of Israel, where the waggon with its load



SAMUEL HEARS THE VOICE OF THE LORD

was met with great joy by the people of Beth-shemesh, who were reaping in their fields when the cart appeared. From there it was taken to Kirjath-jearim, and later on it was brought to Jerusalem, to the Holy Temple.

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou established strength against Thine enemies."—Ps. VIII. 2 (Author's Version).

THE STORY OF KING SAUL

"Stand you still awhile, that I may tell you the word of God."—1 SAM. IX. 27
(Author's Version).

Samuel had grown old. He had appointed his two sons to be judges, but they did not follow his example nor walk in his way, and the people became very dissatisfied, so they came to Samuel and said that as he was now growing old, they wanted a man who, like a king, would go out before them and lead their army in battle against their enemies, for they were still surrounded on all sides. When Samuel heard their request he was at first much disturbed in his mind. He thought they were rebelling against God's command, and he described to them the suffering and hardship they would bring upon themselves by the appointment of such a king. But the people were not convinced ; they insisted upon having as king a military leader. And God told Samuel that he was to listen to the people's demand and to appoint a king over them, but that God would choose the man who was to be appointed.

At that time there lived a man called Kish, who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. One day some of his asses went astray. He called his son Saul, and sent him with his servants in search of the asses. Saul wandered a long time over many parts of the country, but could not find the asses. Seeing that his search had been in vain, he said to his servants : "Let us return home, for my father may think we are lost. He will grieve over us more than over his asses." They had reached then a place called Zuph, and the servant said : "Come, let us inquire of the Seer who lives here ;

perhaps he will tell us where the asses are, and which way we are to take."

As they were going up they met some maidens coming out to draw water, who directed them to the place where Samuel was. He had just come to the town to perform the sacrifice, and the people were waiting for him.

The night before, God had appeared to Samuel and had told him that on the morrow the man would come whom God had chosen to be the future leader of Israel.

Samuel came that morning to the town, as had been arranged, and he prepared the sacrifice. All the people gathered round, and Saul, with his servants, was amongst them. Samuel saw Saul, and he at once knew that this was the man God had chosen, for he stood out from the rest, being a very striking and handsome man, and taller from his shoulders upwards than any man in Israel. Samuel invited him to go up to his house and be his guest. There he showed him marked honour, and early the next morning at the break of day he called Saul and told him that he was to be the chosen leader of Israel.

Saul first declined the honour. He pleaded that his tribe was the smallest, and his family insignificant. But Samuel persisted, and he gave him some signs by which he, Saul, would recognize that the prophet had spoken the truth, and that he had been chosen by the will and command of God. Then he took a flask of oil and poured it over the head of Saul, and they took leave of one another. The signs which the prophet had foretold came true, and when Saul met a band of minstrels, the Spirit of God seized him, and he also chimed in and prophesied ; since when it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" He also heard that the asses which he had gone to seek had been found by his father.

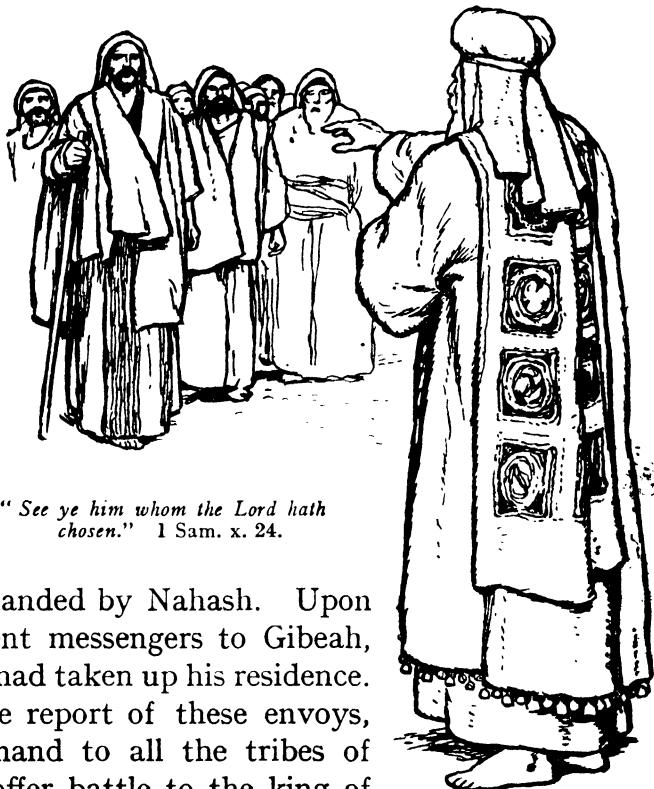
Soon afterwards Saul was able to show his capabilities as leader. Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, besieged Jabesh, a town in Gilead. When the elders sued for peace, he replied that he would accept their submission on condition that he should put out their right eye ; this would be a reproach to the whole of Israel who had

abandoned their kinsfolk and left them to the mercy of the Ammonites. When the elders heard this cruel condition, they asked him to wait for seven days and allow them to appeal to their kinsfolk, the Israelites. Should the Israelites refuse to give them help, they would submit

to the condition demanded by Nahash. Upon his agreeing, they sent messengers to Gibeah, the place where Saul had taken up his residence. When Saul heard the report of these envoys, he sent a stern command to all the tribes of Israel to come and offer battle to the king of the Ammonites. They responded as one man, and he marched against the enemy.

But he sent the messengers before to tell the people of Jabesh that at noon on the seventh day he would be there to deliver them. The people of Jabesh, sure of their deliverance, pretended that they had been forsaken by their brethren, and, in order to take him off his guard, sent word to Nahash saying that they were ready to surrender at noon. Meanwhile, Saul came up with his army, three hundred thousand strong. He divided them into three sections, and at the break of day he fell upon the Ammonites and defeated them, routing them completely. Thus he delivered Jabesh from the hands of the enemies, and the people rejoiced at the valiant deeds of their new king.

"Great deliverance giveth He to His king ; and sheweth loving kindness to His anointed."—Ps. xviii. 50 (Revised Version).



DAVID AND GOLIATH

" Go, and the Lord be with thee."—1 SAM. xvii. 37.

Samuel then told Saul to go up against the Amalekites and destroy the old enemies of Israel. But Saul disobeyed God's command, sent through the prophet, and thus he forfeited the grace and mercy of God. Samuel told Saul that the kingdom would be taken from him and would be given to another chosen by God to reign in his stead.

Samuel was sent by God to Jesse, who lived in Bethlehem, for there he would find the man who in time would become king of Israel. Jesse showed him all his sons, but none seemed to be the

one chosen by God. So Samuel asked whether there were any more sons, and Jesse replied : " There is the youngest son, David, but he is out in the fields with the flocks, for he is a shepherd." Samuel had him fetched, and at once he heard the voice of God saying, " This is the man." So he anointed him secretly

Some time



"Behold, he keepeth
the sheep."

1 Sam. xvi. 11.



DAVID AND GOLIATH

afterwards Saul felt remorse for his disobedience, for he saw that God was no longer with him ; there came upon him a spirit of brooding, from which he could not be roused. Then those about him said that it might be well if a man could be found who was skilled in playing the harp, for music would surely dispel his sad thoughts. There was no one so skilled as David the young shepherd, so he was brought to Saul. And whenever the king's mind began to be clouded and his heart failed, David played and sang to him, and Saul felt more at ease.

At this time Saul was waging war against the Philistines. A large army of Israelites was encamped on a mountain on one side of a big valley, ready to fight the Philistines, who had also gathered a large army on a mountain on the other side, waiting for battle. Among the Philistines was a giant called Goliath. He was six cubits high, and wore a brazen helmet, and was clothed in a very heavy coat of mail. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the spike of it weighed six hundred shekels of iron. Every morning and evening he used to come out and challenge the Israelites, asking if any one of them would dare to come out to fight him. If Goliath won, then the Israelites were to be slaves to the Philistines, but should he be beaten, then the Philistines would be slaves to the Israelites. The Israelites, however, shrank back in terror at the sight of him. This went on for forty days. Now, among the soldiers of Saul were the sons of Jesse. One day Jesse, anxious to know what had happened to his sons, sent David with some food to inquire after their health. While he was there it so happened that Goliath came forth and repeated his challenge, defying the Israelites and also the God of Israel.

David asked what all this meant, and whether there was not anyone willing to take up the challenge. When the soldiers heard David ask about Goliath, they told him that no one had ventured to take up the challenge, and that the king had promised great riches to the man who would fight and conquer the Philistines' giant ; nay, he would even give him his daughter to wife. David then inquired further whether such a promise had been made, and whether

there really was no one willing to take up the giant's challenge. His brothers, who watched him, rebuked him for it, and said that he had not come to inquire after their health, but that he had come to watch the battle. Meanwhile Saul heard of the inquiries of David, and he sent for him, and David said that he was willing to take up the challenge and fight Goliath. Saul said, "How can you, a mere lad, try to fight a man like Goliath, who has been a man of war from his youth?" but David replied : "When I was tending the flock, a lion and a bear came and took away a sheep. I beat them with my stick and delivered the sheep from them, and I leapt upon them and killed them ; and it will be the same with this arrogant Philistine who insults the armies of God, and He Who has delivered me from the paws of the lion and the bear will surely also deliver me from the hands of the Philistine."

Then Saul said to him : "Go ! may the Ever Living God be with you." And Saul put a helmet of brass on his head, and clothed him in a coat of mail, and even girt him with his own sword. David, however, was not accustomed to such heavy armour, and therefore could scarcely walk. So he stripped it off ; he prepared to fight the giant with weapons to which he was better accustomed, and therefore took his sling in his hand, chose five round stones from the brook, and, putting them into his shepherd's bag, with a staff in his hand he advanced to meet the Philistine. Goliath came out to meet David with a shield-bearer in front of him. When he saw David, he looked at him with contempt, for he was a mere lad with a ruddy face and lustrous eyes, and he said to him mockingly : "Am I a dog that you are coming to me with a stick ?" Then he cursed David by his God, and said to him : "Come on ; I will soon give thy body to be food for the birds of heaven and the beasts of the fields." But David replied : "You are coming to me with your spear and sword, but I come to you in the Name of the God of Israel Whom you have blasphemed. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I will smite you and cut your head off and give your body to be the prey of the birds of heaven and the beasts of the earth. And all the people will recognize that the Lord does not save by



DAVID . . . TOOK HIS SWORD AND DREW IT OUT OF THE SHEATH." 1 Sam. xvii. 51.

DAVID AND GOLIATH



"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David."
1 Sam. xviii. 1.

sword or spear, for the Lord is master of the battle, and He will give you into our hands." With these words he thrust his hand into his bag, took out a stone, put it into his sling, and slung it at Goliath. The stone hit him on the forehead, and wounded him mortally. Goliath fell on his face to the ground. David quickly sprang forward and

not having a sword of his own drew Goliath's sword and cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw their mighty champion dead upon the ground, they fled in terror, hotly pursued by the Israelites. It was thus shown again that it was not the mighty valour of a giant which could decide a battle, nor the strength of human power on which the people could rely, but only on God. He alone saved them from the might of the Philistines by the valour of a mere lad, who was meek and trusted in God. Saul, who had watched the combat from a distance, did not recognize David ; he asked those who stood near him who the lad was who had killed the giant. They told him it was David, the son of Jesse. When the victors returned, and the women met them, singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands," he became jealous of David. The king had a son called Jonathan, who was a generous youth, and when he saw David he felt drawn to him, and a deep affection sprang up between them. But Saul grew still more jealous of David,

and had misgivings about him and about the love Jonathan had for him. David saw it and feared for his life, but Jonathan could not believe that his father entertained such feelings against his friend, and at one time he exposed himself to a rebuke, and even endangered his life, by trying to shield David against his angered father.

Jonathan then informed David that his life was forfeit, and David fled and took refuge in the caverns of Judah and among the Philistines until the death of Saul, when he became his successor and king of Judah and Israel.

“Blessed is the man that maketh God his trust and does not respect those that boast, or those who turn aside to lies.”—PS. XL. 4 (Author’s Version).

SOLOMON

“Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart.”—1 KINGS III. 12.

After the death of King David, his son Solomon became king over Israel. At that time the Temple had not yet been built, and the people used to bring sacrifices to different places outside Jerusalem. Such a place was Gibeon. And thither King Solomon went immediately he had become king. There he brought sacrifices to God, and thanksgiving offerings, and there he dreamed a dream, and in that dream God spoke to him and asked him what he would wish that God should give him.

And Solomon, after thanking God for the help which He had given his father David, and for the mercy which He had shown in making him ruler after his father, said that he was young, and that he did not know how to guide a people so great and so numerous as were the children of Israel. He therefore asked for a heart of wisdom and understanding, how to distinguish between right and wrong, and how to administer justice fairly. And God was pleased with his request, and He said to him that not only should wisdom be given to him and understanding how to guide the people, but also the great

wealth and a long life for which he had not asked should also be granted to him. Solomon awoke in the morning, and he knew that it was a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, and there again offered thanksgiving sacrifices to God before the Ark of the Covenant.

And Solomon became the wisest man that ever lived. He knew all the sciences of the time, and he wrote treatises on plants and trees, and also on beasts, fishes and birds. And the fame of his wisdom spread far and wide. Soon afterwards an event occurred which gave occasion to King Solomon to show his great wisdom.

It came to pass that a woman who lived in a solitary house gave birth to a child. In the same house another woman also gave birth to a child three days after the first. One night while that woman slept her baby died. When she saw it, she took her dead child and put it in the cradle belonging to the other woman, from which she took the living child and put it by her side. When the other woman awoke in the morning, on looking at the baby in the cradle she found that it was dead, and that it was not her child. There was no one else in the house, so she turned to the other woman and said : "The dead child is yours, and the living is mine." But the other replied : "Not so ; the living is mine and the dead is yours." They went and appealed to the king. King Solomon asked them to whom the living baby belonged, and she whose child was dead claimed the living one, whilst the other, who was the real mother, refused to acknowledge the dead child as hers. Then King Solomon asked for a sharp sword. When it was brought, he said : "Cut the living child in two and give one half to the one woman and the other half to the other." She who was the mother took pity on the baby, and said, "Spare the child ! Let her have it, so long as it remains alive" ; whilst the other woman said, "Let the child be cut in two, and we will each have half." She showed no mercy. Upon which the king said : "Give the living child to her who asked that the baby should be spared, for she has thereby proved that she is the real mother." When the people heard the report of this judgment, they greatly admired the wisdom of Solomon, and the fame of him grew still greater and spread to the uttermost ends of the earth.



THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON



Solomon had now won the hearts of the people, and they all trusted in his wisdom. Peace had been secured by his father, David, who had successfully beaten all the enemies of Judah and Israel. So he now undertook to carry out the plan which had been conceived by David, to build in Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom, a temple in which to place the Ark of the Covenant. He made it of cedar-wood brought from Lebanon, and of huge stones hewn from the mountains. The vessels were all of gold, silver and brass, and he covered the whole temple with gold. It was a most magnificent building, and it lasted four hundred years.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding."—PROV. III. 13.

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

"The Lord, He is God."—1 KINGS xviii. 39 (Revised Version).

Solomon reigned forty years. But towards the end of his reign he did not follow God's commandments, and after him came many kings, and some of them were very wicked; but of King Ahab, a weak-minded man, we are told "he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before

him." Also he married Jezebel, a Phœnician princess, who was very wicked and very cruel, and who worshipped idols, Baal being the chief god. She caused Ahab and the whole of Israel to forsake the worship of God and to worship idols, and "she slew the prophets of the Lord." And God sent His prophet Elijah to threaten Ahab with a long drought as punishment for the wickedness of the people.

Nearly three years had passed since the prophet had foretold the drought to the king. Ahab sent to every province and every tribe to seek the prophet, but he could not find him. The message of God now came to Elijah to go and show himself again to Ahab. When the king saw him, he asked him whether he was the one who was troubling Israel, but the prophet boldly replied : "Thou and thy family are those who are causing the trouble to Israel, for thou hast forsaken the God of Israel and gone after the worship of idols." And he declared he could show to Ahab and the whole people of Israel that the Lord alone was God. Only then would the drought be broken and God shower His blessings upon the land, when they all would acknowledge the Lord as God. He professed his willingness to enter into a contest with the prophets of Baal, and thus prove to them all the vanity of their idol. Let them assemble together at Mount Carmel, where all the people should be gathered, and let them bring two bullocks, of which one would be offered up as a sacrifice by the priests of Baal, and the other by himself to the God of Israel, and whosoever would answer by fire would prove that he was the only true God. Ahab accepted the challenge. The people assembled before Mount Carmel, and also the priests of Baal assembled there to the number of four hundred and fifty. Elijah addressed the people and said to them : "Why are you swinging between two gates ? Either Baal is god or the Lord is God. Choose !" The priests of Baal then arranged the wood upon the altar, cut up a bullock, placed it upon the wood, and then started their usual ceremony, leaping and shouting round the altar. This went on from early morning till noon. Elijah stood by and mocked at them, for there was no answer, and he said to them : "Your



"THE FIRE OF THE LORD FELL, AND CONSUMED THE BURNT SACRIFICE.
1 Kings xviii. 38.

god may be talking—cry louder. He may be hunting or away on some journey, or perhaps he sleeps : you had better wake him.” In their frenzy the prophets of Baal cut themselves with knives and spears until their blood gushed. But there was no voice and no reply. When the sun was beginning to go down, Elijah prepared the altar that had been destroyed. He brought twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, and built it up with them. Then he had a trench dug round the altar ; he spread the wood and cut up the bullock and laid the pieces upon the wood. He then asked the people to fill a bucket with water and pour it over the altar. This he asked them to do three times, until the trench was filled and overflowed up to the altar.

Then Elijah prayed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to show to the people that He was the true God. And fire fell from heaven and burned up everything, even the altar, and the water in the trench was licked up by the flame. All the people then fell upon their faces and exclaimed : “ The Lord, He is the God ; the Lord, He is the God.” After this Elijah had those priests of Baal seized, and as they had induced Jezebel to kill the priests of God, so he ordered the people to slay them, and thus also to uproot the worship of false gods.

When Elijah saw the repentance of the people, that they had turned again to the God of their fathers, and Ahab with them, he told Ahab that now he could, with easy mind, feast and make merry, for the drought was soon to be broken. He heard already, as it were, the murmuring sound of the oncoming rain. Ahab did as Elijah told him, and went up and ate and drank. Elijah, however, went to the top of Mount Carmel, and a servant with him. There he cowered upon the ground with his knees drawn up and his head between his knees, and he told his servant to see if anything was coming up over the sea. The servant said he saw nothing. The prophet sent him seven times, and at the seventh time he came back and said that he saw a little cloud like a man’s hand coming up from the sea. Elijah at once sent down to Ahab to haste and go back to his own place, for he might be overtaken by the storm. In a

short time the heavens were covered with thick black clouds, and the rain fell abundantly.

But Ahab returned to his evil ways, and only once more does he appear to have repented. He died miserably in battle ; and Jezebel was thrown out of a window by her own servants, and trampled upon by Jehu, who had been made King of Israel in place of Ahab.

Not long after this Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, and his servant Elisha became prophet in his stead.

" And He shall say, ' Where are their gods, the rock in which they trusted ; which did eat the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering ? Let them rise up and help you, let them be your protection. See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God with Me ; I kill, and I make alive ; I have wounded, and I heal ; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.' "—DEUT. XXXII. 37-39 (Revised Version).



*"Would God my lord were
with the prophet that is in
Samaria."*
2 Kings v. 3.



ELISHA

"Am I God to kill and to make alive?"—2 KINGS v. 7.

The prophet Elijah had appointed Elisha as his successor, and upon him came also the spirit of prophesying. At that time there lived a man called Naaman. He was the captain of the host of the King of Syria, who kept him in great honour, for he was a valiant man and had won many victories for his king. But he suffered from a skin disease. It came to pass that some of the troops of the King of Syria had invaded the land of Israel, and among the captives there was a young girl, who became a slave to the wife of Naaman. One day she said to her mistress : "I wish the master would go to the prophet in Samaria, for I am sure he would heal him of his illness." The wife told the husband the words of the young maid ;



"AS THE LORD LIVETH, BEFORE WHOM I STAND, I WILL RECEIVE NONE."
2 Kings v. 16.

and when the King of Syria heard of it, he urged Naaman to go, and he gave him a letter to the King of Israel. Naaman took his chariot and, accompanied by his guard, came to Samaria and presented the letter to the king, in which was written that the King of Syria had sent his captain Naaman to the King of Israel to heal him of his disease. When the King of Israel read the letter, he rent his clothes and said : "Am I God to kill or to make alive ? Evidently the King of Syria is only making a pretext to attack me."

When Elisha heard that the king had torn his robes and had humbled himself, he sent for Naaman. Naaman came to him and stood at his door. Elisha did not go out to meet him ; he only sent a messenger telling Naaman to go and dip seven times in the waters of the Jordan. Naaman felt greatly offended by the manner in which the prophet had received him, and with the message which he had sent. He said : "I expected the man to come out and call upon the Name of God, to utter some prayer, or to wave his hand over the skin and heal me" (for such were the ceremonies practised by the priests who pretended to charm illness away). "And if it is a question of only dipping into the waters," he continued, "the waters of Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, the capital of the kingdom of Syria, are at least as good for me to bathe in as the waters of the Jordan." And, full of rage, he turned to go away. But his officers said to him : "If the man of God had ordered you to do something very great and difficult, would you not have done it ? Why should you not do such a simple thing as to dip seven times in the waters of the Jordan and so wash yourself ?" Naaman did accordingly, and to his great surprise and astonishment a wonder happened. His skin, which had been covered with disease, became as soft and clean as that of a young child. Then Naaman returned to the prophet and thanked him and offered him gifts. He had brought with him a large quantity of silver and gold and costly raiment. He also professed his faith in the God of Israel, Who had so signally helped him, and begged the prophet to accept the presents from him. But Elisha refused and would

not accept anything. It was not for the sake of presents for the prophet that God had healed the sick Naaman, but in order to show him His greatness and might, so that he should henceforth believe in Him alone. When Naaman saw that the prophet steadfastly refused to accept anything from him, he asked for a gift. He asked the prophet to give him two mule loads of earth from the holy land of Israel, for he wanted to build out of it an altar in his own home, and as one who now worshipped the God of Israel, he would henceforth bring his sacrifices upon it to the true God only. At the same time he begged Elisha that he should be forgiven if, when he accompanied his master to the temple of the god Rimon, and the king leaned upon him, he would appear also to worship that god. Whereupon the prophet Elisha said to him, "Go in peace." And he departed with his loads of earth.

After he had gone away, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, said to himself : " If my master refuse to accept any gift, why should I not obtain at least some of it ? " So he ran after Naaman, who alighted from his chariot when he saw him coming. After the usual greeting, Gehazi said that some men had come from Mount Ephraim to the prophet who were in need of help, and the prophet had therefore sent to ask for some. Naaman at once gave him some shekels of silver and some raiment, which Gehazi took and hid in his house. When he returned to Elisha, the man of God asked him where he had been. He said " Nowhere," but Elisha replied : " Did not my heart follow you ? Did I not see Naaman alighting from his chariot ? " Gehazi had now, as it were, accepted the payment for that cure which had made Naaman become a worshipper of the true God. The illness of Naaman would therefore rest on him as a punishment, upon him and upon his family after him. And as Gehazi left the man of God, his skin was covered with the disease of Naaman.

" Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits : Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; Who healeth all thy diseases." —Ps. ciii. 2, 3.

board feared that the ship would founder. Each man prayed to his god, but Jonah had gone down into the hold of the ship and had laid himself down to sleep. The master of the ship came to him and said : " What ! thou thinkest of sleeping ? Arise and cry to thy God ; perhaps He will determine otherwise, and we shall not perish." Then they said unto one another : " Let us cast lots, and we shall see who is causing us this danger." And they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. They asked him whence he came, what was his occupation, and what he was doing, and why he should be the cause of this hurricane. Jonah replied : " I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God Who has created heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land." And he went on to tell them that he was fleeing from the Lord, and the men were very much frightened when they learned he was fleeing from God. So they said to him : " What shall we do unto you to appease the sea ?" And he replied : " Take and cast me overboard, for I know that this storm has come upon you on my account." But the sailors hesitated to do this, and tried hard to bring the ship back into the harbour, but they did not succeed, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous. The sailors prayed to God that they should not be allowed to perish with this man, nor should they be found guilty for his death. Then they took Jonah and cast him into the sea. The storm at once ceased, the sea grew calm. And the sailors offered prayers to God and made vows of thanksgiving. God appointed a huge fish which swallowed Jonah up and dragged him down to the bottom of the sea. And he prayed to God from the depth of the sea into which he had been drawn. He said : " The weeds are entangled round my head, I am sunk to the bottom of the mountains, and even the bars of the earth are closed around me, yet God will bring up my soul from the pit." After three days God ordered the fish to cast Jonah up on the land. And again a message came to Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the people in the Name of God of the punishment that would overtake them unless they repented.

Nineveh was at that time a very great city, and it took three days to cross from one end to the other. And Jonah went across

it for three days, and proclaimed that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown. When the inhabitants of Nineveh heard this message in the Name of the God of Israel, they believed and proclaimed a fast, and clothed themselves in sackcloth. The news reached the King of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, took off his royal garments, put on sackcloth, and, like people who repent of their sins, he sat in the dust. And by his order a general fast was proclaimed for men and beasts ; none of them should partake of food or drink of water. Everyone was to repent of his own sins, and each should return to his neighbour whatever he had wrongfully taken from him. When God saw how greatly the people repented, He took pity on them, and instead of punishing them He showed them mercy.

When Jonah saw what had happened, he became very angry, for he feared the people might take him to be a false prophet. And Jonah prayed to God and said : “ Is this not what I said when I was still in my country ? I know that you are a God of love and mercy and forbearing, full of pity for the sinner, and that is why I fled from Thee to Tarshish.”

Jonah had made himself a hut outside the town on the eastern side of the city and there he waited to see what would happen to Nineveh. It was very hot there, for the first rays of the sun already touched it. Meanwhile God had caused a plant to grow, which covered the hut with its broad leaves, and thus shaded it. And Jonah was very pleased. But one night God sent a worm to pierce the plant, and caused it to dry up and shrivel. The next morning the sun poured down fiercely upon the head of Jonah, causing him to faint, and he grieved very much over the drying up of the plant which had protected him with its shady leaves. And God asked him, “ Dost thou grieve for this plant ? ” and Jonah replied, “ Yes, I grieve unto death.” And God said : “ You are grieved so much over the disappearance of a mere plant as to ask to die, for which, moreover, you neither laboured nor caused to grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. Then shall not I have pity on that great city Nineveh,



"YET FORTY DAYS, AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN." Jonah iii. 4.

where there are more than six score thousand who do not even know their fellows on right and left ? ” Surely it were better that they should be saved to repentance rather than perish through sin for were they not God’s creatures, and for them He is always full of love and mercy.

“ Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”—EZEK. XXXIII. 11.

THE STORY OF HEZEKIAH

“ I have heard thy prayer.”—2 KINGS XX. 5.

So great from time to time had been the sins of the Kings of Israel, that God had delivered them into the hands of their enemies ; but when Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, came to the throne of Judah, a complete change took place. He obeyed all God’s commandments, and walked in the way of his ancestor David.

He destroyed all the idols, broke down all the pillars and altars where people used to worship strange gods in the time of his father ; and there was no other king before or after him who trusted in God as King Hezekiah did. And God was with him and protected him, and he prospered greatly. He shook off the yoke of the King of Assyria, and made his country free. But Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, gathered a mighty host. He came to Judah and took all the fortified towns, and sent some of his foremost generals to besiege Jerusalem and capture it.

Rabshakeh, who was the spokesman of the commanding generals, then called for King Hezekiah. Three of his ministers came out. Then Rabshakeh said in a loud voice : “ Speak to King Hezekiah and say to him, ‘ On whom dost thou trust, that thou didst revolt against me ? If thou trusteth on the King of Egypt, then he is like a broken reed which pierces the hand that leans upon it ; and if thou trusteth upon thy God, He will not save thee from the hands of the great King of Assyria. Where are the gods of all

the other nations whom he has conquered ? Have they been able to save their countries ? Have these not been destroyed ? Who are the gods of the other countries who have delivered them out of the hand of the King of Assyria ?'" The ministers of King Hezekiah then asked Rabshakeh to speak in the Aramaic and not in the Judaic language, as they did not wish the people to hear what Rabshakeh was saying. But Rabshakeh turned to the people and said to them : " Do not listen to the words of Hezekiah, who is deceiving you, saying that the Lord will deliver this city from the hand of the King of Assyria. No other god has been able to save his country, and how could your God deliver you ?'" But the people stood silent, and never answered. The ministers rent their clothes and went up to King Hezekiah. When he heard the blasphemous words of the envoys of the Assyrian king, he rent his clothes and went up to the temple to pray to God. He also sent word to the prophet Isaiah for him to pray to God, Who had been so gravely insulted by the words of Rabshakeh.

The prophet Isaiah encouraged the king to resist the demand of King Sennacherib. He assured him that God had heard the blasphemous words of that man, and the boasting of the king. It would all be in vain, for neither would they be able to shoot an arrow into Jerusalem nor lift a shield



"He removed the high places, and brake the images." 2 Kings xviii. 4.

against it. A report would reach the king which would cause him to return to his country, and there he would fall by the sword. So although King Sennacherib sent another threatening letter demanding the submission of King Hezekiah, the latter refused to obey, for he was confident that his prayer would be heard, and all the kingdoms of the earth would know that the Lord was God, and that He would save His people out of the hand of the King of Assyria. For all the gods which had been burned with fire were no gods, but the work of man's hand. On that very night in which the prophet had foretold the deliverance of Jerusalem, an angel of the Lord came forth and smote one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians, and when the people of Jerusalem woke up in the morning they found the fields outside the town covered with dead bodies. After this discomfiture Sennacherib fled to Nineveh. One day, when he went to worship his god in his temple, two of his own sons killed him, and thus the word of God which He had spoken to Isaiah was fulfilled.

Some time afterwards King Hezekiah fell seriously ill, and the prophet Isaiah came and told him that he would not recover from this illness, and that it would be best for him, therefore, to make all the necessary preparations. But Hezekiah's faith was very strong. He turned to God and prayed that God would prolong his life. Had he not fulfilled all God's commandments, and had he not led the people in the way of righteousness and justice. God heard his prayer, and before Isaiah had left the inner court a message came to him from God, saying : " Tell Hezekiah that I have listened to his prayer, and his life will be prolonged for another fifteen years."

Isaiah at once brought this happy message to the king, but the king wanted now a proof that God had promised him a long life. In the palace there stood a sundial, made by King Ahaz, where the hours were marked by the lengthening shadow. So the prophet Isaiah asked the king whether he would be satisfied if the shadow would suddenly stretch some degrees farther on the dial, or whether he would prefer the shadow to become shorter by so many degrees. The king replied that he would prefer the shadow to become shorter,

as a token that in the same manner as the shadow started lengthening, so his life would start lengthening again. This would be a satisfactory proof. And so it came to pass the shadow became shorter by ten degrees.

Meanwhile the prophet had ordered a plaster of figs to be put upon the inflammation from which the king was suffering, and the king was so quickly healed that three days afterwards he was able to go up to the Temple and thank God for having restored him to health.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."—Ps. xxxiv. 7.

THE THREE YOUTHS AND THE FIERY FURNACE

"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego."—DAN. III. 28.

It came to pass that when Nebuchadnezzar had taken the city of Jerusalem, in the time of King Jehoiakim, he carried away a large number of youths from the royal family and from the nobles and the best of the land. Among them were Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael. When they were brought to Babylon, the king handed them over to his High Chamberlain with the order that they and the other youths should be trained in all the arts and sciences, and become fit to serve in the palace of the king.

Daniel and his companions were God-fearing youths, and every day Daniel used to turn his face towards Jerusalem and pray three times. Now, these youths were to be fed from the royal table, and were to drink wine which was also used on the altar. Daniel and his companions remembered that God had punished their people for the sins which they had committed, in that they had walked in the ways of the heathen and had forsaken their God. They

determined, therefore, to observe all the Laws, and not to be defiled by any food or drink which was not lawful for them to have. They therefore approached the High Chamberlain and asked him not to give them any of the royal food. They would prefer food made of grain, and they would drink only water. The Chamberlain was greatly afraid ; he feared the king would punish him severely ; nay, he might even lose his head if any of the youths entrusted to his care did not look fair and comely. But they reassured him and said : “ Put us on trial for ten days ; let us have the food as we like it, and then compare us with our companions, and see whether the food will not agree with us.” He did as they had asked him, and when the ten days had passed Daniel and his companions looked much better than any of the other youths.

They were therefore allowed to have their own food and drink as they wished, and they were instructed in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Chaldeans ; and, moreover, they were given names of Babylonian nobles, as was customary to those who occupied a high rank, and so Daniel was called Belteshazzar, and the other three were called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When three years had passed, the High Chamberlain brought all the youths who had been under his charge to King Nebuchadnezzar for him to choose from among them those who would please him most, and the king’s choice fell upon Daniel and his three companions, for they excelled all others in wisdom and knowledge, understanding and skill.

It came to pass that the king saw some visions in a dream. When he awoke he found that he had forgotten them, but he remembered that he had dreamed something which had disturbed him. There was no one who could remind him of his dream except Daniel, in whom there was Divine wisdom, and he alone was able to tell the king what he had dreamed and what it meant : it was a warning from God. Thereupon the king gave Daniel a very high appointment, and his three companions with him.

Some time afterwards King Nebuchadnezzar erected a statue of gold. It was a colossal statue of his god. Then he called together all the kings and rulers and governors and nobles of the country,



"WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE FIRE, AND THEY HAVE NO HURT."
Dan. iii. 25.

to dedicate them to the statue, and issued a proclamation saying that as soon as the sound of the horn, the harp, the psaltry, and other musical instruments should be heard, all these representatives of the various nations and towns of the kingdom should fall down and worship the god to whom the king had dedicated his kingdom and his country. But should anyone refuse to do so, they would be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace which had been erected there. All the kings and rulers and nobles came together, and when they heard the signal they all fell down upon their faces and worshipped. Not so the youths. They were there in virtue of their official position, but they refused to bow down to worship. There were men among the multitude present who saw what these three youths had done, so they went up to the king and denounced them. The king at once sent for them, and he asked them whether they had heard his proclamation and the order which he had given—that all those present were to bow down and worship before the statue of the god, and that if anyone refused to obey he would be cast into the burning fiery furnace in the very centre of the place. But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were not frightened at the word of the king. “ We cannot obey your order, for there is a true God Whom we worship, and He can save us even from your hands and from the fiery furnace. And even if we should not be saved, we shall still worship Him and none else.”

When the king heard their bold speech, he became furious and ordered some very strong men of those present to come forward and tie these three youths up in their garments, and at the same time to heat the furnace seven times stronger than before. The heat was so great that the men who cast the three youths into the fire were overcome by the flames and were burned to death; but the fire did not seem to touch them, except that it burned the cords with which they had been tied, and they walked about in the midst of the fiery furnace; and the Lord sent His Angel down to them into the fiery furnace to protect them from the flames. The king and the people who looked on saw what had happened, and in great amazement the king cried out: “ Did you

not cast three men into the furnace ? Why, there are four, and they are walking about !” He was seized with fear at this sight, and he called to the young men to come out. They obeyed the king’s command, and when they stepped out of the fiery furnace it was found that not even the hair of their heads had been singed neither were their clothes injured.

Full of awe, Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed : “ Praise be unto the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Who sent His Angel to deliver the servants who trusted in Him, for they preferred rather to die in the fiery furnace than to worship another god. And therefore anyone who shall speak slightingly of the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be most severely punished, for there is no other God able to save like their God.” And Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were appointed to higher positions in the town of Babylon.

“ When thou passest through waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”—ISAIAH XLIII. 2 (Revised Version).

DANIEL AND THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR

“ God appointeth whomsoever He will.”—DAN. v. 21.

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, one of his descendants, became king over Babylon. One night he assembled over a thousand lords with their wives and servants, and he gave them a great banquet. They were feasting and drinking. When the king had drunk too much he became arrogant, and his mind overbearing. He was no longer satisfied to drink from the goblets and cups which he possessed, but he asked that those goblets and cups of gold and silver which had been taken from the Temple of Jerusalem should be brought to his banqueting table. There he would drink out of them, he and his lords and their wives, and would

defile them, for they would drink in the honour of their gods of gold and silver, of stone and wood, and thus mock at the living God, in Whose service alone they had been used. Whilst they were thus drinking out of the sacred vessels which were some of the spoils of his ancestor Nebuchadnezzar, there suddenly appeared part of an arm, the fingers of which wrote on the wall in letters and words which they did not know, and the light of the lamp fell upon that mysterious arm and the writing. When the king saw it, his face changed ; he was struck with awe. His knees shook, and he called all the wise men and the diviners and astrologers, and he asked them to read and to interpret the writing on the wall. So greatly was he impressed by what he had seen that he promised a very high reward to the man who would be able to interpret it. He would give him a purple robe of honour, and put a gold chain round his neck, and he would make him one of the three governors of the kingdom. But of the wise men and astrologers who were called, none was able to read or to interpret the writing.

When the queen heard what had happened, and how greatly the king and his lords had been troubled, she came to the banqueting hall, and, addressing the king, said : " May the king live long, yet let your thoughts not trouble you. There is a man in the kingdom full of wisdom and understanding who already in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the king, was able to interpret dreams and to dissolve doubts. The king appointed him to be head of all the diviners and astrologers. Let Daniel be called, and he is sure to interpret also this writing." When the king heard these words he sent for Daniel, who at once came before him. The king said to him : " Art thou Daniel, one of the sons of the captivity of Judah whom King Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Jerusalem ? I have heard of thee that thou art a man of wisdom and understanding, and that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee. If thou wilt now read and interpret to me this writing, then a purple robe will be given thee, and a gold chain be put round thy neck, and thou shalt be one of the three governors of the kingdom."

But Daniel would not accept any gifts or rewards from the king.



BELSHAZZAR SEES THE WRITING ON THE WALL

He refused the purple robe and the gold chain and the high position, and he said let the king keep the gifts for himself, but he would try and interpret the writing. Then he continued and said : " King Nebuchadnezzar was a great and mighty king. God gave him power and glory, and all the nations of the earth trembled before him. He could kill and keep alive

MENE
TEKEL
UPHARSIN



"Let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation." Dan. v. 12.

whomever he chose. But then, seeing his might, he grew arrogant, and forgot to recognize that all he had was given to him by God. When his pride grew beyond measure and his heart insolent, his mind became changed; he was driven from power and lived like a beast in the fields until his pride became humbled, and then he again knew that God alone rules in heaven and upon earth, and that He raises and lowers whomsoever He will. But thou, Belshazzar, although thou knewest all this, not only didst thou not humble thyself before God, but in arrogant defiance didst thou take the cups of gold and silver which were reserved for the service of the Most High, didst thou bring them to defile them and to drink out of them, together with thy lords, their wives and servants, in honour of thy gods of gold and silver and brass and stone ; and therefore that arm has been sent by God,

and the words the hand wrote are as follows : ‘ Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.’ And this is their interpretation : ‘ Mene,’ God has counted the days of thy kingdom, and it has come to an end. ‘ Tekel,’ Thou hast been weighed in the balances and hast been found wanting. ‘ Upharsin, Peres,’ Broken up has been thy kingdom, and it is being given into the hands of the Persians and the Medes.” And whilst Daniel was thus interpreting the writing of the mysterious hand on the wall, which foretold Belshazzar the doom that had overtaken him for his wickedness, Darius, the king of the Medes, burst into the town, which had been left undefended, for all the lords and generals had been assembled at the banquet, and Belshazzar the king was slain in that very night. The kingdom of Babylon came to an end, and the Persians became masters of the whole empire, as foretold by Daniel.

“ Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”—PROV. xxvii. 1.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

“ He alone delivers and saves.”—DAN. vi. 27 (Author’s Version).

After the conquest of Babylon, Darius appointed one hundred and twenty governors of the provinces, and over them three Premiers, of whom Daniel was the first, for he stood high in the king’s favour. The king had heard of Daniel’s wisdom, and knew that the spirit of God was in him. He trusted him, for he knew him to be very faithful and loyal. The other governors and lords became very jealous of Daniel, to whom the king showed so much favour, and they tried to find some fault in him, to denounce him to the king, but they did not succeed. At last they came to the king with a peculiar proposition, for they knew that they could not attack Daniel except through his faith. So they went to the king and said : “ All the lords, governors, rulers and princes request the king to publish a decree to the effect that for thirty days no man is to

solicit anything from God or man unless he first approaches the king and obtains his permission. Should anyone transgress this decree, then he is to be cast into the lions' den." The king, who never suspected that the plot was aimed at Daniel, signed the decree, and it was the law of the Medes and Persians that any decree that had once been signed could never be revoked nor changed; not even the king himself could alter it. Daniel knew that such a decree had been promulgated. Yet in spite of it he would not allow it to interfere with his regular worship. It was his custom to pray three times on his bended knees in front of an open window which was in the direction of

Jerusalem. His enemies, who knew his pious habits, only waited to see him pray. They at once went to the king and denounced him. They said that Daniel had transgressed the law and paid no heed to the king's command, and he must therefore be punished and cast into the lions' den. Such were the terms of the decree, and the king knew well that it could neither be changed nor altered. The king was greatly troubled at the



"Daniel . . . kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed."
Dan. vi. 10.

news, and he would have liked to save Daniel, but he had not the power to do so. He still waited with the hope that something might happen to save Daniel until it was near the setting of the sun, but the conspirators urged upon the king the necessity of the carrying out of the decree. Very reluctantly, the king at last gave orders for Daniel to be cast into the lions' den. Then a stone was rolled to the opening to close it, and the king, as well as the lords, put their seals around the stone, so that no one should be able to tamper with it. And yet the king still cherished the hope that the God Whom Daniel worshipped would save him from the lions, as He had saved his companions and friends from the fiery furnace.

Then the king returned to his palace, and he passed a very troubled and sleepless night, fasting all the time. Early in the morning he rose up and went hastily to the lions' den. When he came near he raised his voice very anxiously and cried : " O Daniel, Daniel, art thou alive ? Has the God Whom thou worshippest been able to save thee from the lions ? " Daniel replied : " May the king live long. God has saved me. He has sent His Angel and has shut up the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, for God knew my innocence, nor have I done any wrong to you."

When the king heard Daniel's voice he was full of joy. He ordered the people who were with him to remove the stone at once from the top of the pit. Then they pulled up Daniel, and it was found that there was not even a scratch upon him. The king by now understood the wickedness of the plot of Daniel's enemies, and the real meaning of that extraordinary decree which they had made him sign—that no man should pray to God unless he first obtained the king's permission. And so he ordered that these men should now be cast into the lions' den, and receive the punishment which they had arranged for Daniel. No sooner did they reach the ground than the lions fell upon them and tore them to pieces, and even broke their bones to splinters.

Then King Darius promulgated another decree instead of the one which he had been made to publish at the request of the governors and lords and princes. And this time he ordered the people to



"DANIEL WAS TAKEN UP OUT OF THE DEN." Dan. vi. 23.

A. S. DIXON

worship God, to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, " for He is the Living God, and His kingdom lasts for ever. He alone can deliver and save, and all the wonders in heaven and upon earth were made by Him alone. He has delivered also Daniel from the power of the lions."

And Daniel continued to hold a very high position in the kingdom of Persia under Darius and Cyrus.

" Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be condemned."—Ps. xxxiv. 21 (Revised Version).

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

" The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour."—ESTHER VIII. 16.

It came to pass at the time when King Ahasuerus was King of Persia and Media, when he ruled over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, that he made a feast for all his nobles, generals and princes, in Shushan, the capital of the kingdom. There he displayed to them the great wealth of his empire and the wonderful treasures which he possessed. This lasted one hundred and eighty days.

When these six months were over, he ordered a banquet to be given to all the inhabitants of the capital, which was to last for seven days. He assembled them all in the beautiful garden court, hung with rich draperies on silver rings, which were fastened to marble columns. They were seated on cushions and sofas richly embroidered with silk, gold and silver. The pavement was of all kinds of marbles and porphyry, and wine was given in abundance, by the order of the king, in goblets and cups of many patterns. Everyone was allowed to have as much as he wished, without check or compulsion.

On the seventh day, when the king was becoming exhilarated through the wine which he had drunk, he sent for his wife Vashti,



DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

the queen, to show her to all the people assembled, for she was a woman of very great beauty. Vashti, on her part, had also arranged a banquet for the women, for they did not associate with the men. When she heard this summons of the king which the chamberlains brought her, she refused to leave her own banqueting feast and to appear before the other people. This was a very grave insult to the great king, and his wrath was kindled. He therefore turned to the ministers of state, the keepers and interpreters of the Law, and asked them what to do with the queen, who had affronted him publicly in such a manner. The men replied that the affront was not only offered to the king, but to all the princes and nobles, and even all men had been insulted by this refusal of the queen to obey the king's orders. If this should become known throughout the kingdom, the women might all despise the men, and there would be great wrath and strife, the men feeling the insult.

An example therefore had to be made to teach the women the respect which they owed to the men, who were masters in their own houses. It was therefore necessary to punish Vashti severely, and they suggested that she should be deprived of her queenship and sent away; and this should be done by a decree, which should be proclaimed throughout the



"The Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment."
Esther i. 12.

empire in all the languages and writings of the peoples, so that it should not be altered or withdrawn.

The king was pleased with the advice which was given to him, and Vashti was removed from her position.

After some time the king's wrath calmed down, and he remembered with regret what had happened to Vashti, and what had been done to her. When his chamberlains saw this, they advised the king that a search should be made through the kingdom for the most beautiful maidens, and he should then choose one of them to be the successor to Vashti. The king was pleased with the advice, and he gave orders to have it carried out.

At this time there lived in Shushan a Jew whose forefathers had been carried away captive from Jerusalem by King

Nebuchadnezzar. He belonged to the same noble family of Kish as Saul, the first King of Israel, and his name was Mordecai. With him lived his cousin Hadassah, also called Esther, whom he brought up, for she was an orphan. She was a most handsome and comely girl, and she too was brought to the house set aside by the king for the gathering of the maidens. There she behaved with great modesty, and when her turn came to be presented to the king,



*"Mordecai bowed not, nor did
him reverence." Esther iii. 2.*

she found favour in his eyes, and he chose her to be queen in the place of Vashti, and placed a crown upon her head. The king celebrated the occasion by granting many gifts to the various nations that lived within his empire.

But Esther, on the advice of Mordecai, neither spoke nor boasted of her noble Jewish descent.

Mordecai himself occupied a prominent position at the court of the king. At one time he discovered a plot which two of the king's chamberlains had hatched to kill Ahasuerus. He informed Esther of his discovery, and she warned the king of the plot. The matter was inquired into, and the two men were found guilty and condemned to death, and the story of the plot and the part which Mordecai had played in it were duly registered in the book of daily events, which was written for the king.

A few years passed, and King Ahasuerus raised to the highest post of the empire a man of low origin, called Haman the Agagite. This sudden elevation to a post second to that of the king himself so much turned his head that he demanded all the courtiers and nobles to worship him as a god. They were to kneel down and prostrate themselves before him whenever they saw him. Out of fear for their lives they did so, but the only man who would neither bend the knee nor prostrate himself in worship of Haman was Mordecai the Jew, who remained true to his faith and worshipped only God.

When Haman saw that Mordecai would neither bend his knee nor worship him, he was filled with hatred, and he determined to destroy him, and with Mordecai all those who were of the same faith, for he was told that Mordecai was a Jew, and that no Jew would prostrate himself and worship him. Haman therefore went to the king and said to him : "There is a single nation which is scattered over the whole empire. They do not obey the king's orders, and there is no benefit to be derived by the king leaving them in peace. Let them be exterminated, and I will pay into the treasury of the king ten thousand talents of silver." The king was easily persuaded by Haman, and, with his sanction, a decree was issued ordering all the

governors of the provinces to exterminate the Jews on the thirteenth of Adar, young and old, men, women and children ; not one was to be spared, and their property was to be looted. This decree was sealed with the king's seal, and a proclamation was also issued in Shushan itself, whilst the king and Haman were banqueting and feasting together. Wherever this edict came, the Jews were greatly troubled ; there arose a wailing and crying over this cruel decree, which gave them over to wholesale massacre for no reason and for no guilt of their own. In Shushan itself this proclamation created a great stir. When Mordecai saw it, he tore his clothes off his back, covered himself with sackcloth, and cried bitterly in a loud voice.

Queen Esther's maids heard the cry ; they saw Mordecai walking in his sackcloth outside the palace, for no one was allowed to enter the court who was not properly clothed in robes. They informed Queen Esther of what they had seen. She did not understand what had happened to cause Mordecai to put on sackcloth, so she sent her chamberlain to inquire into the reason. Mordecai told him of the proclamation which had been made ordering the wholesale massacre of the Jews, and he went on to say that she should now go to the king and ask that the decree be revoked. Queen Esther then replied that, as he well knew, no one was allowed to enter the inner court of the palace, where the king sat on his throne, under penalty of death, unless the king should stretch out his sceptre towards those who came in. She herself had not been called to the king for some thirty days. When Mordecai heard that answer, he sent the following message to her : " Do not presume to believe that because thou art in the royal palace thou wilt be saved, for all will perish, even thou and thy father's house, and who knows whether thou hast not reached this station just for an occasion like this. And if help should not come through thee, we are sure that help and salvation will come from another quarter." He knew that God would not forsake His people, and that He would frustrate the wicked plan of Haman.

When Queen Esther received this message, she sent word to Mordecai to gather all the people together, so that they should fast

and pray for three days, and entreat God's mercy. She would do likewise, and then she would go to the king, happen what may. And if she was to die, she would die.

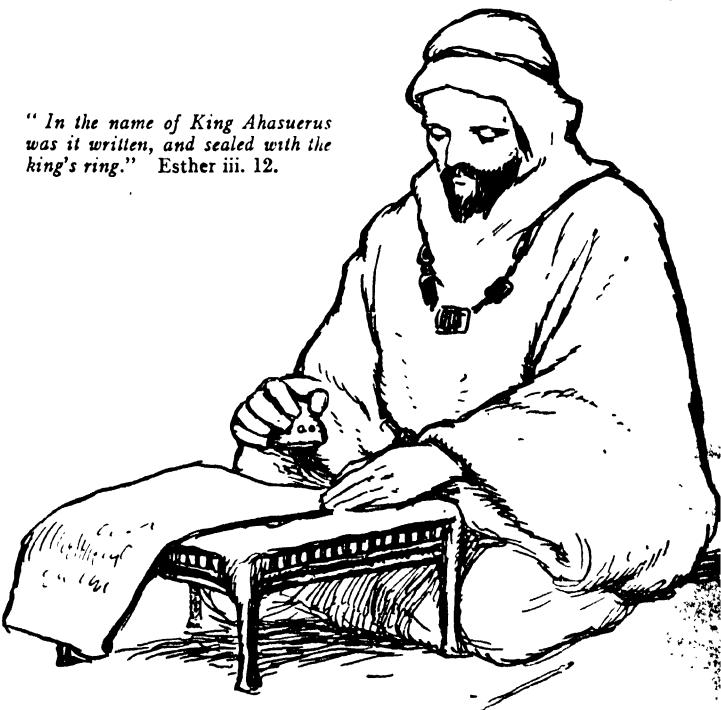
Esther dressed herself in the royal robes and went into the inner court. The king was sitting on the throne, with a sceptre in his hand. He was pleased to see Esther, and he stretched out his sceptre towards her. She approached and bent down and kissed the tip of the sceptre. The king asked her : " What is thy request ? and whatever it be, even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be granted to thee." And Queen Esther said : " My only wish is that the king and Haman may come to the dinner which I have prepared for them." Then the king gave orders to Haman to get ready quickly, and they went together to the dinner.

There they made merry, and the king again asked Queen Esther, " What is thy request ?" for she hesitated to speak to him at once about the decree. She replied : ' If I have found favour in the eyes

of the king,
may the king
and Haman
come again to-
morrow to the
dinner which
I will prepare,
and I will then
make my re-
quest."

Then they
went out, and
when Haman
left the palace
he was more
than usually
elated at the
great honour
that had been

*"In the name of King Ahasuerus
was it written, and sealed with the
king's ring." Esther iii. 12.*





"The book of records . . . read before the king." Esther vi. 1.

him. When he reached his house he called his wife and relatives together, whom he had hitherto neglected, and told them of the great position, and of the great honour which had been done to him ; but he added, " All this is as naught to me so long as that man Mordecai mocks at me." Then his wife said to him : " Let them make a gallows extending over fifty cubits, and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it, and then you will be able to go to the dinner happy and glad-hearted."

Haman was pleased with the advice, and gave orders for the gallows to be erected.

It came to pass on that night that the king lay sleepless in his bed, so he ordered that the book of records should be brought to him. And as they were reading they came upon the story of the plot of the two chamberlains, and how Mordecai had saved the king's life. The king asked, " What reward or honour has been shown to the man ?" and they replied, " Nothing has been done." The king then asked, " Is there one of the councillors about in the court of the palace ?" The pages of the king replied, " We believe Haman is in the court." He indeed had come to the outer court of the palace to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged. So the king said, " Bring him in." When Haman came in, the king asked

bestowed upon him by the queen, who had not invited anyone else besides the king. But when he passed Mordecai, the latter never as much as moved before him, and Haman was filled with fury against



"HAMAN . . . SAW THAT THERE WAS 'EVIL DETERMINED AGAINST HIM BY THE KING.' Esther vii. 7.

him, " What honour should be shown to the man in whom the king delights ?" Haman was so full of his own greatness that he thought to himself, " Surely there is no other man whom the king delighteth to honour but me ?" And he said : " Let the man be dressed in royal robes such as the king is wont to wear, let the crown be put on his head, let him be mounted on the king's charger, and let one of the great nobles lead the horse through the streets, and let it be proclaimed before him in the city, ' This is the man whom the king delighteth to honour.' "

" Go and do as you say to Mordecai the Jew, who sits in the court of the palace. Not a thing is to be changed," was the answer of the king. Haman was confounded. He took the robes and the crown and clothed Mordecai with them. He made him mount the king's charger, and led Mordecai through the streets of Shushan, whilst they proclaimed before him, " This is the man whom the king delighteth to honour." After he had finished, Haman returned home vexed and troubled in his spirit. There he met his family again, and told them what had happened to him. Whereupon his wife Zeresh said to him : " If this Mordecai is a Jew, then as thou hast now begun to fall before him thou wilt never rise."

Whilst they were speaking, the king's messenger came and called Haman hastily to the banquet. At the dinner the king again asked Esther, " What is thy request ? and even if it were half of my empire, it shall be granted." Then the queen answered and said : " If I have found favour in thy sight, give me my life and that of my people, for we have been sold to murder, destruction, and extermination. I should have kept silent if we had been only sold as slaves, but the enemy does not care for the loss that will accrue to the king through our wholesale destruction." Then the king asked, " Who is it that has dared to plan such a thing ?" " This Haman here," replied the queen ; " he is the enemy who has plotted our destruction, a cruel and wicked man." The king rose excitedly and went out into the garden, and Haman was terrified and fell down before the queen, begging for his life, for he saw that evil had been determined for him. When the king returned, one of the chamberlains present



ESTHER CROWNED BY KING AHASUERUS

said, "There are the gallows which this Haman had erected for Mordecai." Whereupon the king replied curtly, "Hang him upon it." So they hanged Haman on the very gallows which he had erected for Mordecai.

When the wrath of the king had been before him and begged of him to withdraw the had issued, with his sanction, to massacre the Jews. But told her that a royal decree could not be withdrawn, but another decree could be substituted with a slight change instead of the Jews being massacred on that day, the to defend themselves against their enemies and mass And just as in Haman's decree it was stated that the Jews should be looted, so the Jews would be allowed to loot that of their enemies. It was to happen on the selfsame day which had been appointed through Haman when he cast the lots to find day which he believed to be propitious to their old

Mordecai also was appointed successor to Haman, out the decree in the name of the king, and sealed it with the seal. And wherever this proclamation was made, the Jews rejoiced at this unexpected deliverance.

When the day came the Jews accordingly rose up and defended themselves against their enemies, who had prepared themselves to attack and massacre them on that day ; but the Jews did not touch their property.

Queen Esther and Mordecai then established this day and the following day, in which the fight was continued in Shushan, as a commemorative festival day. They called it Purim, because the word "Pur," means "the lot," cast by Haman when he tried to fix the day for the destruction of the Jews. On that day the Jews were to remember the wonderful manner in which God had saved them from the hands of the wicked Haman ; they were to celebrate it by kindness to the poor, by charitable deeds, and by sending gifts to one another as a sign of general rejoicing.

"Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein : and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."—PROV. xxvi. 27.



*"He made a great
slaughter of men."*
1 Macc. i. 25.

JUDAS MACCABEUS

"Strength cometh from Heaven."—1 Macc. iii. 19.

It came to pass that Alexander, King of Macedonia, had conquered the kingdom of Persia, and ruled over many nations and many lands for twelve years. Before his death he divided his vast empire among his most faithful generals ; Egypt fell to the lot of Ptolomeus, and Syria, to which Palestine belonged, fell to the lot of Seleucus, who had built a new capital for himself, which was called Antiochia.

One of his descendants was Antiochus, called Epiphanes. He war against Egypt, conquered the land, and brought home

much spoil which he had gathered from the cities of Egypt. Seeing himself victorious, his pride knew no bounds, and therefore when he entered Jerusalem he first spent his wrath on the inhabitants, whom he suspected to have been friendly to the Egyptian King, because the latter had befriended the Jews in that country. Then, carried away by the arrogance of his belief in the strength of his heathen gods, he entered the Temple and took away the golden altar, the candle-stick, the table, and all the treasures which he had found hidden in the vaults of the Temple.

The people mourned over the desecration of their sacred Temple ; but there were among them, and especially among the priests—and at their very head the High Priest Jason—men who favoured the ways of the Greeks. They imitated their customs, and forsook the laws and stern commandments of God.

When Antiochus had reached home, he decided that all the religions of all the other nations, with their laws, should be abolished, and all the nations under his rule should worship his gods. Many of them submitted to this decree, for anyone who refused to obey the king's order was mercilessly put to death. Many of the renegade Jews also submitted to this rule, some out of the fear of death and torture, others because great rewards were offered to anyone who would forsake his own faith and worship the god of the heathen.

On the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the ninth month, an idol was erected in the courtyard of the Temple of Jerusalem, which was now dedicated to the worship of that god, and swine were offered upon the altar before that idol. Great was the slaughter among the pious Jews who refused to bend their knee or to bring such abominable sacrifices, or to eat of the swine's flesh ; for the king had sent officers, not only to Jerusalem, but to every part where Jews lived, with strict orders to carry out this command, and to put to death those who kept the Sabbath or the Covenant of Abraham, or who would not worship the king's gods. All the books of the Law that were found were torn to pieces and burnt, and great was the danger that the Jewish Faith would be exterminated.



"We will fight for our lives and our laws." 1 Macc. iii. 21.

It came to pass that a king's messenger arrived at a place called Modin. The head of the community was a certain Mattathias, of high priestly origin. When the messenger came to that place, he called the people to the market-place; there he erected an idol and called upon Mattathias to sacrifice to it, saying to him: "I

know you are the

leader and the most respected man in the community. If you obey the king's command and bow down and worship, then all the people will follow your example, and the king will reward you greatly for having obeyed his commands." But Mattathias fearlessly replied: "I will neither bend down nor worship nor obey the king's command. I can only obey the command of my God." Whilst they were thus discussing, lo! there came a Jew from the multitude, who took a swine and sacrificed it on the altar in their presence. This so enraged the old Mattathias that he there and then slew the wicked offender against the law of God, and this acted as a signal for the general revolt. The people could not endure the terrible persecution any longer, and in their fury they destroyed the altar, the statue of the god, and the messenger who had brought it, and also the soldiers who had come with him. Other places followed the example set in Modin by Mattathias and

his valiant sons, and soon the revolt spread far and wide. But these poor people were only a small number, and they had no arms.

So they first took refuge in the caverns of the mountains of Judea. They fled thither with their wives and children and the cattle they were able to gather together. But the army of Antiochus was soon after them in pursuit. They knew that the Jews would not fight on the Sabbath, and so they waited for the Sabbath day, when they entered the various caverns and slaughtered the people mercilessly, man, woman and child. From that day onwards the Jews decided to defend themselves even on the Sabbath if attacked, for otherwise they would have been utterly destroyed. Thus they foiled the plan of the king's soldiers.

Soon afterwards Mattathias died, and the leadership came into the hand of his son Judas, named the Maccabean—that is, “The Hammerer.” He was able to gather a large number of people round him and prepare to resist Antiochus. His first great battle was with Apollonius, the governor of Samaria. The latter had gathered a large host and had gone out to fight the Jews, but Judas proved the stronger; he fell upon Apollonius unawares, killed a large number of his army, and the rest fled panic-stricken. Among those who fell on the field of battle was Apollonius himself, who had commanded the army in person. Judas, as a sign of his victory, took his sword, and therewith fought all his life long.

The news of Apollonius's defeat reached Seron, the governor of Syria. He said to himself: “I will go and smite Judas, and thereby win honour and much spoil.” So he gathered a large host, and with him went also a good many of those who had forgotten their duty to their own people. They marched southwards until they came to a place called Bethhoron, where Judas had gathered his followers. These, however, were a very small number, and when they saw the vast multitude of Seron's army their hearts sank. They also felt weak from long fasting. But Judas encouraged them, and said: “It is not by the multitude that victory is won; strength comes from Heaven. They come in pride and iniquity to destroy us, they come for spoil and loot, but we fight for our lives and our

laws. And therefore the Lord will overthrow them even now before us." Encouraged by these words, they fell upon the army of Seron and defeated it utterly. Some of the remnants had to take refuge in Philistia.

The dread of Judas fell upon the nations, and the fame of his victories reached the King Antiochus. He therefore gave orders that a very large army should be gathered together, the very largest he could command ; he also put two of his most valiant generals at the head, Gorgias and Nicanor. They were to march into Judea and utterly annihilate the Jewish nation. Thus, then, a huge army marched into Palestine and pitched its tents at Emmaus. Other people also gathered to them, as the promise had been made that the land taken from the Jews should be given by lot to strangers. Also merchants had come from various parts—slave-dealers ; they had come with much gold and silver in the hope of buying the children of the Jews whom the army of the king would capture and sell as slaves. So sure were they all of the victory.

Judas Maccabeus, on the other hand, gathered his army not far

from that place, and they spent their time in fasting and in prayers, for they saw the huge numbers that had come up against them. Yet their hope was unabated ; they trusted in the God of their fathers, Who had helped them before and was sure to help them



"They rent their garments, and made great lamentation."
1 Macc. iv. 39.



"AND THEY . . . LIGHTED UP THE LAMPS THAT WERE UPON THE CANDLESTICK, AND
THEY GAVE LIGHT IN THE TEMPLE." 1 Macc. iv. 50

again, and not allow His Holy Name to be profaned by the heathen, and His people to be utterly destroyed.

Now, the Greek general sought to outwit Judas and his men by taking them in the rear with part of his army. But Judas saw through that manœuvre, and moved his camp to another place before the army of the Greeks had been able to reach it. When they arrived there, they found the place empty. Meanwhile Judas had prepared for an attack on the other part of the army in the early morning, at a time when the enemy least expected them, for they relied on Gorgias overtaking Judas and destroying him and his followers. But Gorgias, instead of joining with the army, had moved farther away into the mountains in search of Judas, for he said the Jews were fleeing before them.

When the king's army saw the Jews approaching, they came out to meet them ; but Judas again encouraged his people by reminding them how God had helped their forefathers on many occasions, although they had been fighting against multitudes. The Jews blew their trumpets and attacked the advancing army and so discomfited them that they fled in terror, some fleeing a long way. The number of those that were slain was very great, but the battle was not yet over, for the Jews had still to face Gorgias, who was then coming out of the mountains. When his people saw the tents burning and their army scattered, they knew that the battle was lost, and, like the others, they also started running, hotly pursued by the victorious Jews. These went back to the camp, took all the spoils, the money which the slave-dealers had brought with them, and intoned a hymn of thanksgiving and praise to God.

The land of Judea was now practically free from the army of King Antiochus, and Judas Maccabeus and his companions bethought themselves of the Temple that had been defiled. They determined, therefore, to go to Jerusalem, to the place of the sanctuary. When they went up to Mount Zion, they found the place desolate, the gates burned, weeds growing in the courtyard, and the houses of the priests broken down. After much lamentation and weeping at this terrible sight, they started cleansing the place ; they removed the altar of

stone on which sacrifices had been brought to the heathen idol, and, bringing new stone, they built up another in accordance with the Law. They replaced the golden altar of incense, the table for shewbreads, and the golden candlestick. They struck the flint and obtained holy fire to offer up the sacrifices and to burn the incense. Then they searched for oil to light the candlestick, and they found only one small flask with the seal of the high priest closing it, as a sure proof that the oil had not been used for any profane purposes. It was a small flask, and it was thought that it would last for one night, but by a miracle it kept the light burning in the candlestick for eight days, until fresh oil was obtained. And they kept the Festival of the New Dedication of the Temple, cleansed from the pollution of the heathen, for eight days : firstly in remembrance of that miraculous light, and in addition in remembrance of the Feast of Tabernacles, which they had not been allowed to keep in Jerusalem. This happened on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the ninth month, on the very same day on which the heathen had desecrated the altar in the Temple three years before. Judas and his companions decreed that this feast of dedication, called Hanucah, should be kept henceforth as a memorial throughout the ages. And whatever happened afterwards to the people, and through however many troubles they still had to pass in order to retain the independence which Judas Maccabeus and his faithful companions had won for them, the light of that lamp was never extinguished, and the sanctity of the Holy Temple was preserved until the time of the Roman Conquest.

“The lamp of the righteous burns brightly, but the lamp of the wicked fades.”
—PROV. XIII. 9 (Author’s Version).



"SHE GLEANED IN THE FIELD UNTIL
EVEN." Ruth ii. 17.

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